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[NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER]

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Kayakers gear up to paddle Quebec's St. Lawrence River, page 52.

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ELIE GARDNER (JARS), KRIS GOUGH (FOOD)

WE BELIEVE THE
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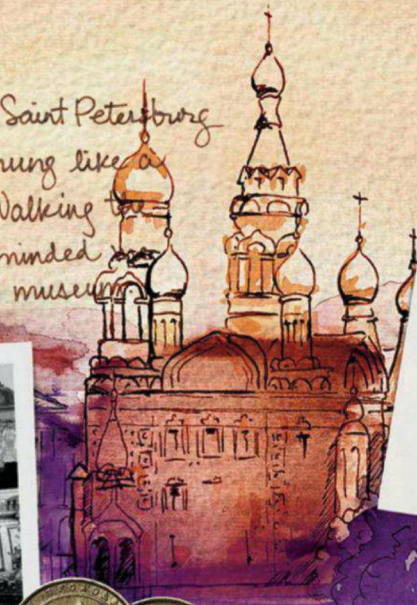
TRAVELED ISN'T A ROAD

AT ALL.

We woke up to a view of the Saint Petersburg skyline. From our balcony it hung like a perfectly framed painting. Walking the city streets this afternoon reminded of wandering through an art museum. Everything was an exhibit.



Our state room!



Russian tea in Saint Petersburg



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Digital Nomad Andrew Evans holds up the National Geographic flag at Bolivia's Uyuni salt flat.

[EDITOR'S NOTE]

Explorers Club 2.0

THIS YEAR THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY celebrates its 125th birthday. That span represents an extraordinary period of wonder that introduced the world to Hiram Bingham and Machu Picchu; Jane Goodall and the chimps of Gombe Stream; the Leakey family's remarkable evolutionary finds at Olduvai Gorge; Michael Fay's march across a stretch of uninhabited Africa; and, most recently, James Cameron's 2012 plunge to the ocean's deepest point. Here at *Traveler* we have pursued more modest journeys, but we share the Society's genes and its drive to probe the world in new ways. Even as we yearn to travel at the pace of an early explorer, the world has sped up.

Andrew Evans, our Digital Nomad, embodies that shift. In the Society's tradition as a leader of discovery, Evans blazes the way for a new generation of traveling digital storytellers, connecting in real time with a rapt social media audience. On page 52 he writes about a little-known slice of Quebec, and as I write this, he is in Cambodia on National Geographic Expeditions' round-the-world jet trip, an extravaganza of wanderlust fulfillment that hits more than a dozen destinations in 24 days (next fall a 125th-anniversary trip will visit several of our most noted current explorers). Andrew began his adventures with us in January 2010 by catching a series of public buses from Washington, D.C., to Tierra del Fuego at the tip of South America, and from there to Antarctica by boat—a 10,000-mile, 10-week odyssey through 14 countries that launched his impressive social media presence. Since then, he has logged countless miles for us, visiting such places as Australia, Canada, Norway, Mexico, Japan, Switzerland, South Africa, and a handful of U.S. states. Follow his travels as they unfold on Twitter (@WheresAndrew) and at the Digital Nomad blog (digitalnomad.nationalgeographic.com). —KEITH BELLOWS

[FOREIGN DESK]

BARCELONA BEAT

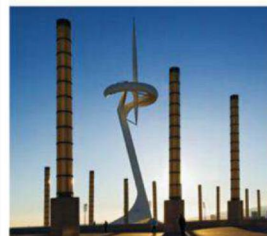
For an inside take on one of Europe's top ports, Barcelona, we checked in with our local colleague Cati Miloro, the editor of *Viajes National Geographic*, the Spanish edition of *Traveler*.

ROUSING RAMBLE

Las Ramblas, with its mix of people, is always amusing. For a perfect end to the promenade, stop for a drink in Plaça Reial—try the terrace at Hotel Do—or wander the stalls in La Boqueria market.

MONUMENTAL ART

I'm hooked on the genius of Gaudí, from the spectacular bulk of La Sagrada Família to the undulating interiors of La Pedrera (or Casa Milà), with its inner patio that doubles as an air shaft.



OLYMPIC AMBITIONS

When I feel like playing tourist, I take the aerial cable car or the funicular to Montjuïc hill [above]. This is the vantage from which many of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games images were taken.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

In the heart of the Gothic Quarter, between the cathedral and Plaça del Ajuntament, Plaça de Sant Felip Neri is an unexpected quiet spot. The only sound is the drip of the fountain.

EVERYTHING RICE

For authentic paella or seafood, you can't beat Barceloneta's beach. The owners of Can Majó buy fresh ingredients daily. My favorite dish is Valencian rice with lobster.



Suitcases in Berlin.

Excess Baggage

FEW TRAVEL TOPICS INSPIRE more chatter—or grief and aggravation—than packing. In “Travel Intelligence 2013” (November 2012), we offered road-tested secrets to smarter packing from National Geographic experts. We also asked readers to share their own rules of the load. The responses could fill a suitcase. “Double or nothing is my motto,” wrote Kevin Arevalo of **Long Island, N.Y.** “If I can’t wear it more than once, I leave it. Always take the best and the most durable options.” Mari Page of **Fountain Valley, Calif.**, takes a similarly pragmatic approach: “I pack my clothing in two-gallon ziplock bags, so I can organize by outfits and days. There’s less wrinkling, and less trouble going through customs.” For Rebekah Reed of **Grapevine, Texas**, the issue of packing is black and white—and khaki. “I can travel a week or more by limiting my color palette to black and khaki

bottoms, white tops, and colorful accessories.” Ailsa Prideaux-Mooney of **Seattle, Wash.**, relies on one wardrobe staple in particular: “I bring my humble sarong everywhere; it takes up almost no room and has myriad uses, from beach cover-up to a makeshift bag. You could even fashion a tourniquet out of it in an emergency.”

Many travelers leave room for a sense of humor. “My packing rules: lots of underwear, nothing that wrinkles, and stuff that can look formal if you squint,” tweeted reader

@SadieDing of **Washington, D.C.** Tweeting from **Australia**, @Missus_B_ chimed in: “Roll, baby, roll!” For other readers, staying connected trumps staying well-dressed. “I always pack a power strip,” wrote Lisa Boice of **Salt Lake City, Utah**. “I travel with too many gadgets to rely on one or two power outlets.”

Other readers pack with a grander purpose. “I always bring gifts,” wrote Peter McQueary of **Ukiah, Calif.** “When I traveled to Kyiv, Ukraine, I packed toys. I’ll never forget my visit to an

orphanage, where my gift stopped the tears of a young boy.” Penny Tracey of **Conifer, Colo.**, stocks up on thrift-shop finds to take on the road. “I wear my bargains and then leave them to be distributed to locals in need. It’s a nice way to give back and also frees up space to fill with local crafts.”

PASS IT ON In his November 2012 editor’s letter, Keith Bellows recalled his transformative first trip to India. “Your note describes my experiences in India so perfectly,” wrote Bob Lange of **Prescott,**

Ariz. “I always feel inadequate attempting to share how India has changed me. Now I can tell people to buy the November issue of *Traveler*.”

SPIN PATROL Travel and politics make a heady pairing, which readers were quick to remind us in response to Christopher Elliott’s “Letter to the President” (The Insider, November 2012), which outlined travel-friendly requests for the White House. The issue went to press well before the election so we were careful not to presume the victor, but, regrettably, some readers were nonplussed. “A range of political perspectives is available to me,” wrote David Middlemas of **Newport Beach, Calif.** “I’d prefer not to get such views in a travel magazine.”

GRAMMAR SCHOOL Readers cried foul copyediting over a November 2012 headline, “Imagine There’s No Countries,” in reference to a new cross-border protected area in Africa. Grammarians can blame John Lennon and his anthem “Imagine” for this subject-verb disagreement.

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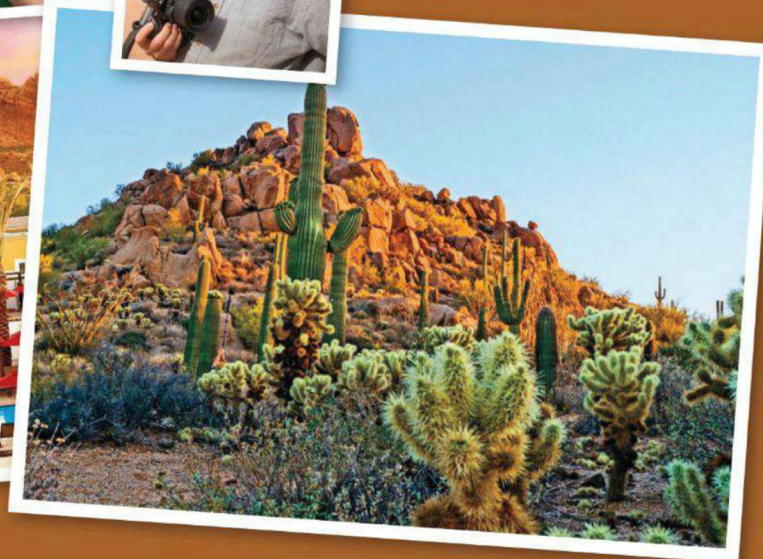
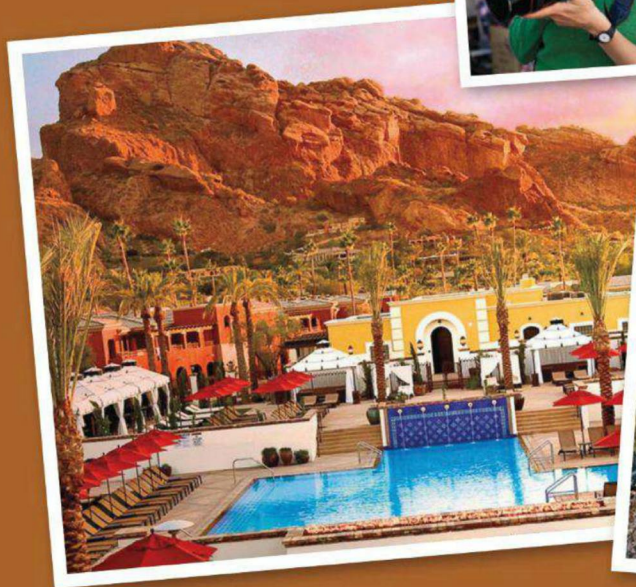
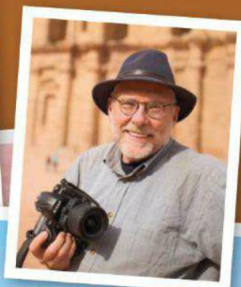
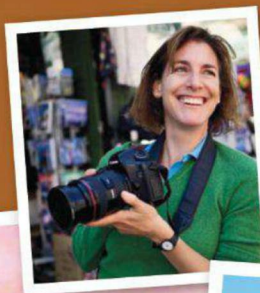


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THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Lima's Bohemian Rhapsody

AROUND THE TURN of the 20th century, a salon society emerged in Peru's capital, Lima, gathering at the mansions of landed Peruvian and European families who summered in **Barranco** ("ravine"), an intimate seaside enclave southeast of the city center. As those bright young things gradually moved on, they left behind an architectural kaleidoscope that shifts from colonial to Gothic to art deco. Artists and musicians transformed those *casonas* into galleries and cafés, but by the 1970s the scene had turned bleak. Happily, a boom of venues has revived the warren. "When people in Lima look for something fun, artistic, or bohemian," says Flor Calderón, a Barranco resident, "they end up here." CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



*Barranco's festive
Parque Municipal.*



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THE NEIGHBORHOOD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

1 Parque Municipal Chess players, couples, and tourists rendezvous in this central green space that is at times tranquil and other times buoyant, with open-air salsa classes, a revolving cast of buskers, and free weekend concerts by regional rock and pop stars in the amphitheater.

2 Museo Pedro de Osma This ivory-hued mansion houses the private cache of Pedro de Osma Gildemeister, an aristocrat who hosted dignitaries



Artesanos Don Bosco

and helped put Barranco on Lima's society map. His collection of colonial-era Peruvian paintings, textiles, sculptures, and books offers a glimpse into the traditional culture that shaped the neighborhood over a century ago.

3 Bajado de los Baños A brick promenade lined by pastel houses, ficus trees, and bright bougainvillea flowers leads from the plaza to a spectacular ocean overlook, crossed by the Puente de los Suspiros ("bridge of sighs"), a slim wooden walkway where lovers linger.



La Pescadería



4 Artesanos Don Bosco An Italian missionary in the 1970s founded the Don Bosco cooperative and began promoting the handiwork of woodworkers from provincial Peru. His efforts continue at this studio and showroom in a restored century-old building, where visitors can watch Andean villagers transform wood blocks into masterful chairs, benches, and cabinets.

5 Dédalo Arte y Artesanía In this boutique selling local artists' wares, the keen eye of owner María Elena Fernández is showcased throughout 14 rooms—from zany aluminum figurines by sculptor Luitpol Ruiz in one nook to sketches of a carefree Limeña girl by Shila Alvarado in another. Lima's current arty set hangs around for its outdoor café, concerts, and master classes in painting.

6 La Pescadería High ceilings and intricately detailed tile floors set a chic scene at this newcomer specializing in sustainable twists on beloved Peruvian dishes, such as the



Japanese-inspired Tiradito Atún Nikkei, a sevice of tuna marinated in soy.

7 Ayahuasca Restobar Throughout this multiroom lounge, the tippie of choice is pisco (Peruvian grape brandy) starring in unexpected cocktails with *camu camu* berry juice and coca leaves. Laid-back evenings morph into ultrahip nights, with the cool crowd wandering in between midnight and 3 a.m.

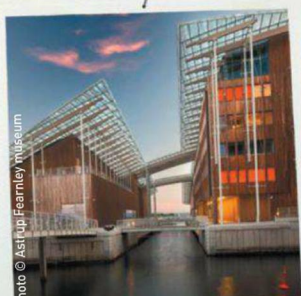
8 La Noche Underground local groups, popular national acts, even Carlos Santana tribute bands—musicians of all kinds take turns here nightly. Shows range from 11 p.m. until the wee hours, fueled by cheap cerveza and pisco sours. An oversize upper-level room offers rotating art exhibitions—and a welcome respite from the throb. —Gary Lee



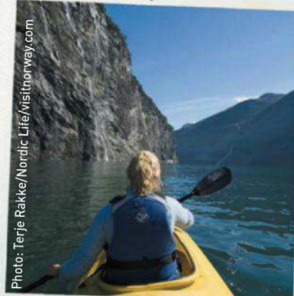
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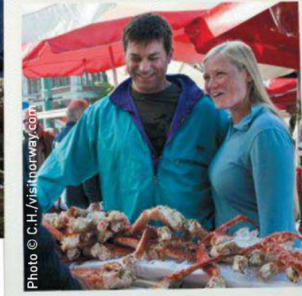
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THE ROUNDUP

Happy Trails

A SCOUT'S SALUTE to the **Appalachian Trail**: The 2,180-mile path—likely the world's longest for hiking only—recently marked its 75th birthday. Trudging the peaks and valleys of 14 states, the white-blazed footpath has been almost completely relocated or rebuilt since 1937 and today boasts more scenic vistas, from Tennessee's Roan Mountain to Vermont's Thundering Falls.

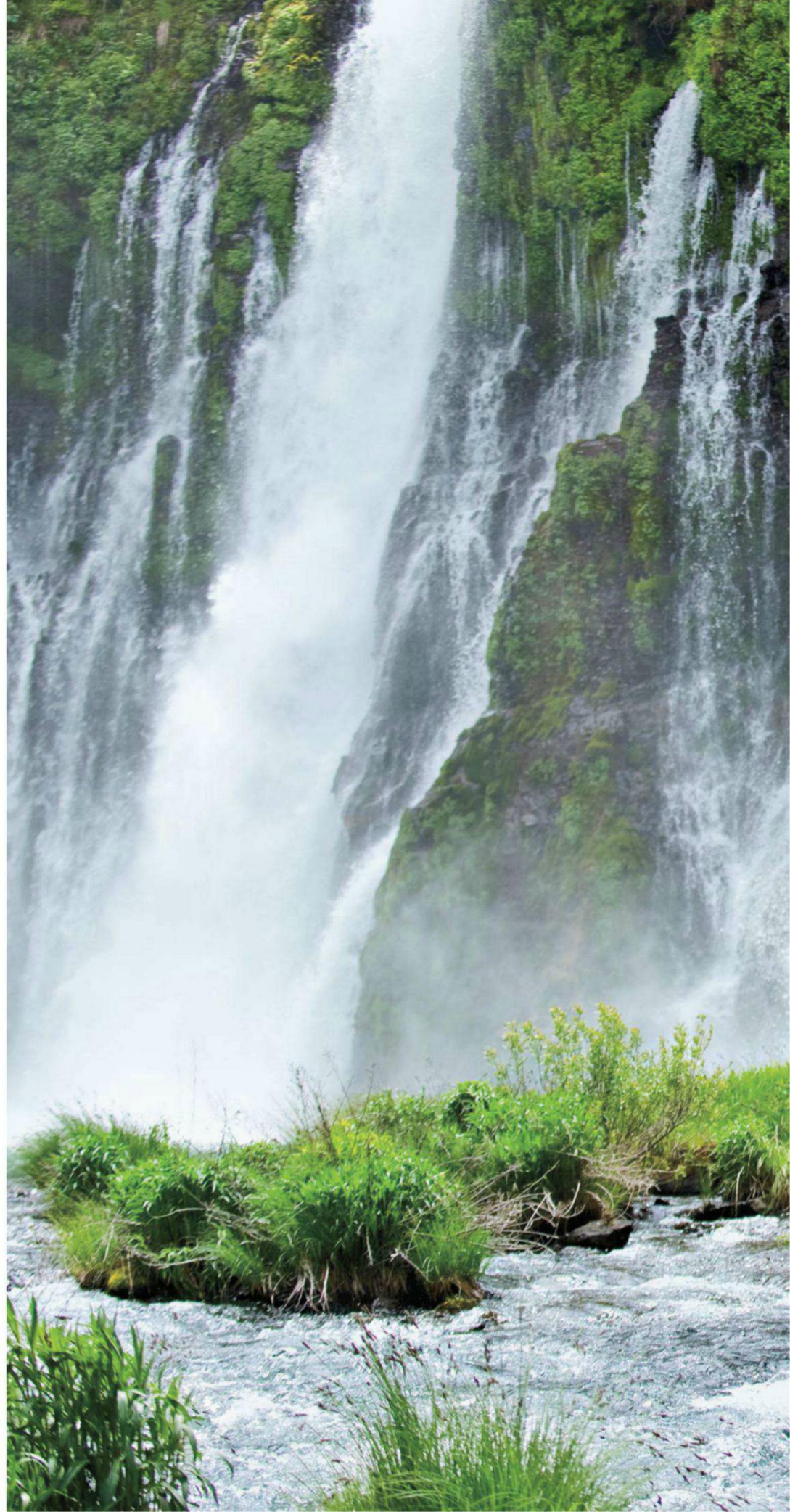
The AT's less popular West Coast sister, the 20-year-old **Pacific Crest Trail**, is enjoying a higher profile thanks to *Wild*, a recent best seller and forthcoming Reese Witherspoon movie. Zigzagging from Mexico to Canada, the rugged 2,650-mile path has been completed by fewer through-hikers than have climbed Mount Everest but offers ample entry points for day hikes such as at Burney Falls in northern California.

The 3,500-mile **Alaska Marine Highway** connects Bellingham, Washington, to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, through the Inside Passage. A product of the 49th state's gold rush, the chain of ferry routes this year celebrates its 50th—golden—anniversary as the only marine route federally designated an All-American Road.

Fueled by a boom in cycling, the **U.S. Bicycle Route System** recently expanded for the first time in nearly 30 years, adding six routes in Maine, New Hampshire, Michigan, and Alaska. The goal is an interstate highway network for bicyclists.

—Katie Knorovsky

SCOTT MARKWITZ



*Hikers negotiate a
log at California's
Burney Falls on the
Pacific Crest Trail.*



THE TREND

A Desire Named Streetcar

BLAME IT ON BLANCHE DUBOIS, but streetcars are sometimes typecast as old-fashioned conveyances. Don't tell that to urban planners in Seattle, Tacoma, and other cities where **streetcars are landing starring roles**. "There's an increasing need for high-quality circulation options within city centers," says Ethan Melone, rail transit manager of Seattle's growing system. Streetcars, which draw electricity from rails or overhead lines but share traffic lanes with other vehicles, meet that need. It's not just efficiency that matters, says Patrick Condon, author of *Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities*. "If we're ever to succeed in cutting greenhouse gases, we need to trade car trips for zero-greenhouse-gas walking, biking, and transit options," he says. For its history and scenic range, Condon favors Toronto's system, which dates to the 19th century, and Portland, Oregon's model, which turned derelict areas into hip 'hoods. New lines in Tucson, St. Louis, and D.C. will debut in 2014, reviving streetcars as the in-vogue way to go. —GEORGE W. STONE



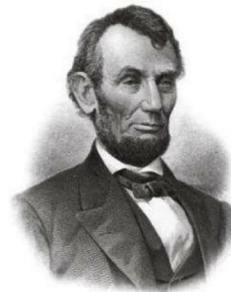
Seattle's pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods make an ideal platform for a streetcar resurgence.



THE TASTE

Date With a Plate

Britain's culinary reputation long dwelt in an unsavory purgatory of bangers and mash. But an **antiquarian food renaissance** is under way. Chef Heston Blumenthal's London restaurant, Dinner, draws on archaic cookbooks, serving delectables such as "meat fruit" (above)—whipped chicken liver shaped like a tangerine and wrapped in an orange fruit glaze. At Gilbert Scott, braised venison and cauliflower pudding are on the menu. And steak and kidney pie is a retro-chic dish at Rules, open since 1798. It seems good taste never goes out of style. —Elaine Glusac



THE EVENT

Freedom on the Move

Once powerful enough to break the backbone of slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation is now so fragile it can only be exposed to limited amounts of light. Which makes the original document's 72-hour stint at the **Tennessee State Museum** in Nashville a banner event. Issued by Abraham Lincoln 150 years ago, the manuscript rarely leaves the National Archives in Washington, D.C. It will be shown over six days for ticketed viewings as part of "Discovering the Civil War" (Feb. 12 to Sept. 2). —G.W.S.

THE PERSON

Queen Bee of Comedy

AS THE MOST senior correspondent on Comedy Central's *Daily Show With Jon Stewart*, which has won 18 Emmys, **Samantha Bee** scours the globe for hypocrisies to satire. No matter her target—from a clueless interviewee to the state of feminism—the sharp-tongued comedienne shoots from the hip. And about that

hip: Usually clinging to it off camera is at least one of three kids ages six and under, whom Bee and costar-husband Jason Jones wrangle between *Daily Show* tapings. The power mom and author (*I Know I Am, But What Are You?*) also blogs for Babble.com, where she often muses about the twists of traveling with pre-schoolers in tow.

What do you love about traveling with kids? Their unbridled joy when they first enter a hotel room reminds me of myself. It doesn't have to be nice, just new. They run around as if they've just been let out of toddler prison.

How important is a sense of humor on the road? The act of traveling itself—just getting

to a destination—can be so fraught with frustrations; I seek all opportunities to sniff out the humor. Our third baby turned out to be an airplane screamer. Nothing excites her more than the sound of an airplane engine and the challenge of out-screaming it. Everyone on the plane may be annoyed, but no one can deny that her tenacity is impressive.

Does your wit ever get in the way while visiting a new place? I try to approach all people and experiences with an open heart and mind. I make jokes for a living, but that doesn't mean I take people for granted. Why bother traveling if you're not going to go all-in? For that matter, why bother leaving the house?

What's your funniest travel story? In Hawaii I had such terrible morning sickness, all I could do was lie in our room with the curtains drawn. In every photo I am sweaty and pale. That's not really funny, but it made me never want to go back. Sorry, Hawaii. You have beautiful turtles.

Did any place change you? Cuba. When my husband and I traveled there in 1997, much of it was nearly inaccessible. The people were incomparably warm but also puzzled by our desire to do things no sane Cuban would consider to be leisure activities. Every time we mentioned our plan to hike across the Sierra Maestra, people would slowly back away as if we were deranged.

Where are you dying to go? Vietnam. I plan to eat my way across the country and then back again. I should probably go by myself, because it's going to get weird.

—Katie Knorovsky



Samantha Bee on set in New York City.

MONTANA

SHAPED BY WINTER

Moonlight Basin, Big Sky

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR, PHOTOGRAPHER, X GAMES MEDALIST KEVIN CONNOLLY

Kevin Michael Connolly zips around the world on a skateboard. He ski races. He climbs peaks, hikes for miles, swims and dives. His photographs have been on display at the Smithsonian. His life is so full that he wrote a memoir Double Take, when he was only 23 and the book became required reading in schools around the country. Not bad for a guy born without legs.

Recently, he sat down to breakfast with veteran journalist Scott McMillion to talk skiing, world travel and Montana, the place they both call home.

McMillion: How old were you when you started skiing?

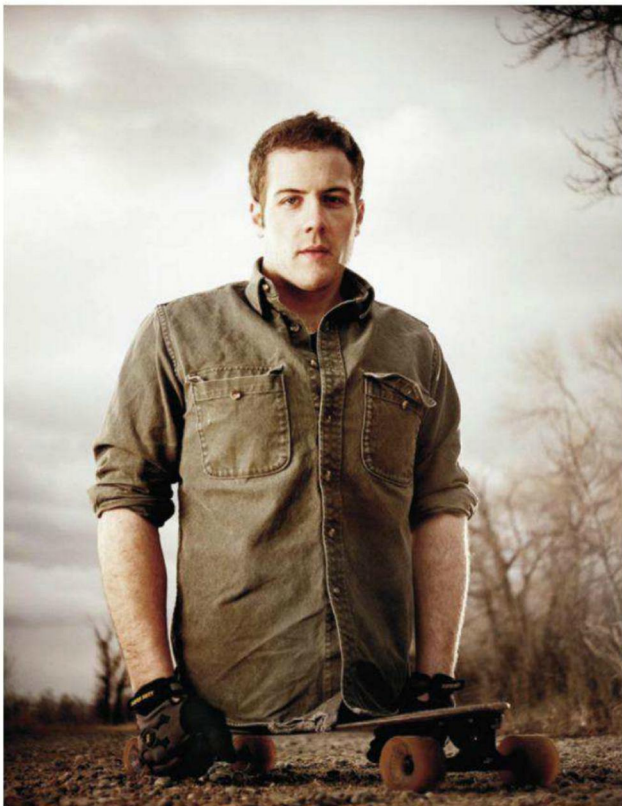
Connolly: I was in the fifth grade. My parents lined me up with Eagle Mount, originally founded in Bozeman, MT, which takes disabled people outside for things like skiing and horseback riding. By the time I was 13, I had won my first national disabled junior championship.

SM: Where did you take it from there?

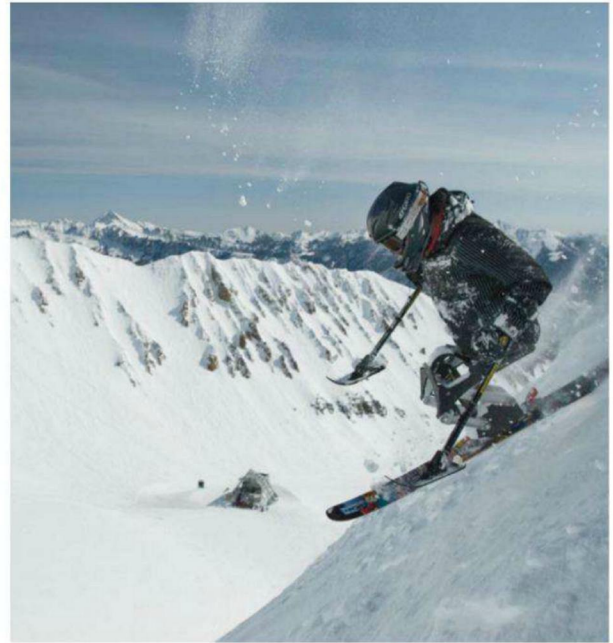
KC: I figured that if I wanted to be able to afford going to college and travel, there wasn't any room for burning money on competitions. So I began to ski for fun. With that weight off my shoulders, I was able to spend my weekends skiing on my own terms. I love being at the top of the mountain, looking out at the peaks in the distance—it's the perfect set up before dropping in on an epic run. That was, of course, until X Games invited me to compete in the Mono-Skier Cross.

SM: How'd you do at the X Games?

KC: I won the silver medal, which came with an \$8,000 prize. So I decided to travel the world with that money, getting around on a skateboard and taking pictures, mostly portraits of people reacting to me, a foreign guy with no legs on a skateboard. People stare all the time, so I decided to turn it into artistic capital, which led to my book. And for the last two years I've been busy with gallery shows, book signings and talks at universities.



Kevin Connolly travels the world by skateboard.



Connolly riding at Big Sky Resort on his custom mono-ski.

SM: But you're still living in Montana, where you grew up.

KC: Absolutely. Even with all this craziness and constant travel, I guarantee I'll always come back.

SM: What's so special about Montana?

KC: Well, we don't have theme parks or pro sports teams. What we do have is landscape and it's very much up to you how you enjoy that landscape. People figure it out, whether it's the badlands or the deep forests. I like the Tobacco Root Mountains, which have a lot of peaks over 10,000 feet.

SM: How do you get up there?

KC: On my hands. I mean, you just do it. There aren't any ramps up there.

SM: Any advice for visitors?

KC: All locals have their secret spots, and we don't always tell people about them. If you're coming to visit, ply a local with friendly conversation and compliments and you might get some secrets out of them.

And, because we have so much wilderness here, you can pretty much throw a rock and have it land off a beaten trail. There's always somewhere to go that hasn't yet been discovered. It really wasn't until I started traveling for photography and work that I got a sense of how unique this place is.

SM: Will you ski in the X Games again? You've won a silver and a bronze already. Don't you want a gold?

KC: I haven't decided. I've got a lot of interesting irons in the fire. A production company has started a movie based on my book and I'm working on another photo project. And the races can be dangerous. I won the bronze in 2010, but I got a compression fracture in my back. And I find that if I compete less, I ski more. I love that lifestyle: breakfast burritos and hot coffee in the morning, driving up the mountain with your buddies. Finding a chute to shred. That's what it's really about.

View more Montana stories, including Kevin Connolly's, at VISITMT.COM/MONTANA-STORIES

THE PLACE

Shake and Remake

TWO YEARS AGO, a series of massive earthquakes shook **Christchurch, New Zealand**, to its spine, folding its central business district into a cordoned-off red zone. But even as the historic gateway to the South Island readies for a years-long rebuild, a spirit of innovation is rising out of the rubble to shake things up for good.

"There's nothing ghoulish about the central city anymore—it's full of potential," says Anthony Wright, director

of the Canterbury Museum. Case in point is the gritty yet jubilant Re:Start mall, a city-within-a-city of bright shipping containers outfitted as cafés, bookstores, and shops, with winding avenues, street performers, and gardens welcoming people back downtown. All around town, in fact, new life is sprouting in vacant spaces. At the quirky Smash Palace on a busy corner, an old bus serves craft beer and "bodgie burgers" (with egg and beetroot)

in a lot strung with multicolored lights and enclosed by scaffolds wrapped with white tarps (bartenders dole out hot-water bottles in winter).

More signs of rebirth: Actor Ian McKellen has rallied around the repair of the historic Isaac Theatre Royal, and September brought the reopening of the central Hotel Ibis, with its restaurant/bar Oopen overlooking Re:Start. Nearby, construction crews work on resurgent Cathedral Square. —Carrie Miller



Christchurch, New Zealand, has cleverly transformed 100-plus shipping containers into shopping spaces on Cashel Street.



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BOYD MATSON

Running on Empty

THE CESSNA GRAND CARAVAN is flying low, 400 to 500 feet, above the wind-sculpted Namibian landscape, and I'm gazing down over a phenomenon called "fairy circles"—spots where vegetation doesn't grow and the sandy soil lies exposed. Red polka dots in a sea of green or orange, they look like a scene from the movie *Holes*, or maybe large-scale paintings by aliens in the style of Victor Vasarely, the optical illusion artist. Nobody can explain why the barren patches always make a circle, and no scientist has proven why nothing grows there. Fairy circles remain the perfect name and explanation. ¶ Clipping along at 130 miles

an hour, our single-engine ride functions as a moving observation deck, allowing us to digest huge swaths of the sunburned Namib Desert in air-cooled comfort. In addition to the fairy circles, the view shifts from black-streaked mountains to abstract sandstone formations to flat and yellow grass-filled pans. From up here, wandering herds of massive oryx look like swarming ant farms. The highest sand dunes in the world morph from shades of putty to rich ocher. Yet amid all this scenic variety, there is sameness to the picture, a sense of vast nothingness. Namibia is the big empty.

Roughly twice the size of California, Namibia has a population of some 2.3 million. That's just seven people per square mile, making it one of the planet's least densely populated nations. Because the country is big and our visit is short, our group of eight has opted to spend time here in the Grand Caravan to get a broader sense of place. Andrea Guerra, our pilot and guide, is as addicted to getting the big picture as anyone, but he also knows that close encounters are essential. He's chosen each lodge stay and land excursion so that we can see, touch, and marvel at what was too tiny to be impressive from the air. At each stop, the same lesson is reinforced: "There is life in the big empty." Conditions may be harsh, but the persistent survive and in some cases thrive, from the world's largest cheetah population to fur seals along the aptly named Skeleton Coast. Flying down a section where dunes dissolve into the Atlantic, we spot the

bones of old shipwrecks and abandoned mining camps and gain some understanding of why the Bushmen dubbed this area "the land God made in anger." However, it's only when we land and drive to the Cape Cross fur seal colony—and breathe in the pungency of 100,000 marine mammals—that we fully comprehend just how alive the Skeleton Coast is.

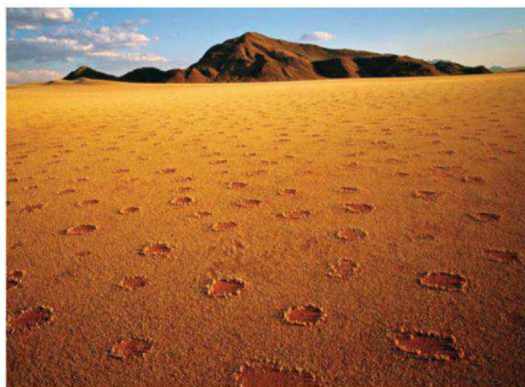
Inland one afternoon, two of us drive out from our camp at the Okahirongo Elephant Lodge in search of desert elephants. Logic would suggest something as big as an elephant would be easy to spot in a treeless, wide-open desert landscape. Logic would also suggest we start at the river where there is food and shade. But our logic would be wrong—or at least different from elephant logic—because we see no sign of the oversize herbivores, although we do see giraffes, ostriches, and antelopes. Once at the river, we see evidence that the elephants were there earlier, but now, in the heat of the day, they seem to have headed into the barren beyond. We follow their tracks for two hours, seeing only footprints and dung piles, and can't help but wonder how something so big could completely disappear, at least without the help of David Copperfield. Finally, 20 miles from the river, we locate five elephants eating a cluster of spiny commiphora trees. They've come here to dine on this plant known for

its fragrant resin used in incense. I see a potential new perfume ad campaign: "Guaranteed to attract your man. Field-tested on elephants—the bigger they are, the harder they fall."

Despite Namibia's sparseness, one member of our group, Joe, has grown increasingly anxious. Every night he looks into the darkness, stares into the unknown, and asks, "Is there a way to lock the doors of the rooms?" A guy from New York City, he's having trouble adjusting to the big empty. Lodge staffers echo what we've seen from the plane, that there are no towns or even villages nearby. But Joe isn't worried about thieves snatching our valuables during the day; he's worried about

those long, dark nights. The staff tries to reassure him that watchmen patrol the camp, ensuring that wild animals and others don't come knocking. But the nights are filled with strange noises, and sometimes you can't take the city out of the boy. So on our fourth night, Joe drags a chest in front of his door and stacks empty cans on the ornate door handle to serve as an alarm. The precautions provide the deep, restful sleep he's been missing. So deep, in fact, that during the night when his wife gets out of bed and bumps into the chest in the dark, lets out a yell, and sends the cans noisily clanging to the floor, Joe snores through it all.

In this land where the San people—among the first humans—still walk, you won't find monuments or signs of conquest. The wild animals tread lightly, too, as if they understand this is not a land of extravagance. But in the big empty there is life in abundance, variety, beauty, and mystery. And it's not all about sacrifice, either: In Namibia it's possible to seek the exotic, as the elephants do. It's also a place where you can sleep soundly, with the doors unlocked. ■



See spot: Fairy circles speckle the Namib Desert.

BOYD MATSON hosts National Geographic Weekend on the radio.



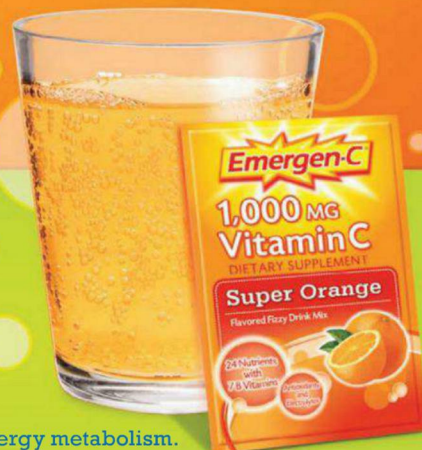
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DAISANN McLANE

Travel's Secret Agent: Coffee

SWAMI DEVADAS asks me how I'm enjoying my week at the yoga retreat center—and I can't help blurting out what's bothering me, though I know it will make me seem whiny, foolish even. ¶ "It's been perfect... well, almost perfect, except for one thing." In fact, I'm having an excellent time. I'm on a white—no, pink!—sand beach in the Bahamas. The view from my ashram-basic room (futon on the floor, portrait of guru on the wall) is a soothing stripe of aquamarine. Twice each day I practice yoga for two hours. I feel terrific. Yet one essential thing is missing. It begins with the letter *c*. I take a deep yogic breath and spill all to the swami.

"I understand why you don't allow alcohol, tobacco, or meat at the ashram. But I wish you didn't prohibit caffeinated beverages, specifically, uh, coffee."

"Ah. Coffee." The swami smiles at me enigmatically and lets the word hang in the air. I twitch uncomfortably and try to think of a way to change the subject from my very nonyogic craving.

In my daily life, coffee is something I can take or leave. I never drink it after 11 a.m. or I will be up past midnight. But travel is another story. There is something about being away from home and on the road that transforms coffee from a mere drink into a magic elixir. For starters, I have tried every jet lag remedy imaginable—melatonin, jumping jacks on arrival—and found no better time zone assist than the mighty *C*. (My method: Drink only water on the flight. Always land during daylight. Use coffee to keep yourself alert and moving until the local bedtime, then crash.)

Coffee helps me over the bumps of travel—not just the time zone switches but airport layovers and all-night train rides. How wonderful to stagger groggily off an overnight sleeper coach in Madrid's Atocha Station and immediately enjoy a steaming *café con leche*.

If coffee were a mere physical stimulant, I doubt I would have made it such a travel fetish. For me, traveling without the possibility of drinking coffee is as nightmarish as traveling without the prospect of conversing with strangers. Could this be because the common

enjoyment of coffee plays a big role in starting those conversations?

I sit at a banquet table in a café on a tony avenue in Berlin. Every element of this situation—the upper-class vibe of the neighborhood, the tendency of city people to keep to themselves, the natural reserve of Germans—conspires to inhibit spontaneous interactions. Then the coffee arrives, dark and deeply aromatic. Another cup of the rich brew is served to the young man next to me. The magic of coffee: Within two minutes the young man has set aside his iPhone and is giving me shopping tips and directions.

When I make my mental list of my favorite places on the planet, I'm embarrassed at how many of them are in what I call the "coffee zone." I don't mean places that produce coffee. Indeed, one of the dismaying things I've discovered is that some of the least drinkable brews are served in places where coffee is grown, such as Colombia and Brazil (where top-quality beans are exported). Rather, my coffee zones are places in which the drink is part of life's rhythm.

Hello, Italy! Can there be a more quintessential Italian experience than elbowing your way to the stand-up bar of a café and ordering a cappuccino? And hello, United States of America, which is a cup of watery Maxwell House brew at the counter in a roadside diner, with your waitress asking sweetly, "Can I warm that up for you,

dear?" In Thailand, takeout iced coffee comes in a transparent plastic bag that swings from your wrist as you carry it. In coffee-obsessed Tokyo, the coffee attendant brews my cup with a timer and a set of expensive glass flasks and tubes on a special table. I feel as if I'm back in eighth-grade science lab.

The rituals around coffee are almost as intricate as those surrounding that other famous caffeinated beverage, tea. In China, India, and Great Britain it's the beverage of choice; there is nothing more restorative during a dank London day than afternoon tea. In Japan, tea ceremonies approach the sublime, especially when you drink the foamy *matcha* green brew on the grounds of

an old Japanese temple. In Muslim Senegal, gunpowder-tea drinking bouts with my Senegalese friends soon had me flying higher than I would on whiskey.

But tea, culturally rich as it is, isn't the same as coffee. Tea relaxes, soothes, informs. It's a drink of introspection and reflection, not of action. My eager traveler's heart will always consider tea an also-ran.

Tea, noncaffeinated herbal tea, is what they're serving here in my Bahamas ashram—and I'm now expecting the swami to lecture me about its meditative benefits. Instead, he motions me into his office and shuts the door.

Opening his top desk drawer, he reaches inside and pulls out five sachet packets of Nescafé.

"Here, take these. Don't tell anybody," he says. Then he adds, shrugging, "I'm German," as if that is sufficient explanation for his secret stash. Of course it is. I slip his contraband gift into my pocket and head back to my personal coffee zone, and my vacation—which now is perfect indeed. ■



A cure for jet lag: expertly brewed coffee in Japan.

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

*Mission Creep
at the TSA?*

LIKE IT OR NOT, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is an unavoidable presence at American airports, from the full-body scanners and “enhanced” pat-downs to shoes on the conveyor belt and ziplock bags filled with trial-size toothpaste. ¶ But it’s becoming almost as difficult to avoid the TSA outside the airport, too. Today, you can be pulled over at a highway checkpoint staffed by TSA agents, courtesy of the agency’s VIPR program (that’s short for Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response team, and pronounced “viper,” by the way). Its most high-profile traffic stop happened in Tennessee in 2011—a training exercise, officials insisted. This year, TSA

administrator John S. Pistole requested funding for 37 teams of roving screeners to the tune of \$100 million.

You might encounter a TSA screening area when you’re at the train station or the subway. In one memorable 2011 incident, Amtrak passengers disembarking in Savannah, Georgia, were screened before they could leave the station. TSA agents have even been spotted at NFL games and political conventions. According to *Government Executive*, an extra 55 TSA screeners were on hand to help the Secret Service check delegates at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte last summer. That’s a real stretch of the agency’s mandate, even for the most security-obsessed traveler.

Is this mission creep? To agency insiders, the answer is: Of course not. TSA is just fulfilling its objectives. “TSA’s mission is to secure transportation systems,” writes Pistole on the TSA website. No qualifiers about aviation security, thanks very much. Defenders of the agency say that it is precisely because of its broad mandate that it has (together with other law enforcement agencies) prevented another 9/11. “By some measures, the TSA has scored a clear success,” observed the nonpartisan *Congressional Quarterly* in a recent cover story. “No terrorist has staged a successful attack on a flight from a U.S. airport since September 11.” One of the most ardent defenders of the TSA is travel guidebook guru Arthur Frommer. “Every time I am patted down, I am grateful for security agents

who take their jobs seriously,” he wrote on his blog. “I am conscious of the fact that their zealotry is deterring all sorts of would-be terrorists from attempting to carry weapons onto planes.”

Critics say there’s no causal relationship between a TSA with a sprawling mandate and the absence of a terrorist attack. Fred Cate, a law professor at Indiana University, says screeners are conducting the law-enforcement equivalent of a clumsy police dragnet. “They’re throwing something at the wall to see if it sticks.” He and others are troubled that the random roadside checkpoints and the intermittent security screenings at subway and train stations could become permanent. Groups such as the Electronic Privacy Information Center are taking a lead in advocating limits to what they view as an expansive TSA. The center is suing the federal government on the decision to deploy body scanners and to ensure the right of the public to have its views heard.

The consequences of going too far in either direction could be serious. We have to carefully balance security against privacy; otherwise we risk becoming a show-me-your-papers-please nation with troubling echoes of other closed societies. “Governments good and bad have always cited national security, the prevention of terrorism, and the defense of freedom as their excuses for surveillance and

control of people’s movements,” says Edward Hasbrouck, a privacy advocate who is one of the leading voices against TSA overreach. “But we can’t defend freedom by adopting measures that prevent us from exercising the rights we profess to believe in.”

Has the TSA prevented one or more terrorist attacks? That’s unanswerable. But I think the price has been high. And I fear that the cost could rise, just to make us feel safe when we travel. We need to order up just enough security as is necessary—and no more.

Previous attempts to define and limit the TSA have failed, despite a blistering 2012 congressional report that recommended downsizing and privatizing

parts of the TSA, and several bills designed to contain the agency’s reach. TSA reform didn’t register as an election-year concern, and neither candidate took a meaningful stance on the issue. Obviously, no political party wants to be the first to reexamine the security apparatus created more than a decade ago, and risk the political repercussions if there’s another 9/11-style attack.

Fellow travelers, let’s call for one sensible step: Revise the TSA’s mission statement to limit its activity to air transportation. After all, we have local and state police, highway patrols, Customs and Border Protection, and, if necessary, the National Guard to protect roads, bridges, railways, and the occasional Super Bowl game. Adding a single word—“air”—to its mission would end its controversial VIPR program. One word would put the TSA’s enormous budget into perspective, allowing lawmakers to ask—and answer—the question: How much do we want to spend on aviation security? I’m willing to bet it would be significantly less than the \$7.4 billion Americans currently pay for the TSA. ■



TSA agents and local police at a train station.

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT addresses readers’ travel problems. E-mail your story to celliott@ngs.org.

COSTAS CHRIST

The Tribes Have Spoken

THE NOBLE SAVAGE. Primitive and uncorrupted by modern civilization, living a life in harmony with nature and each other. This image has been around for centuries, promulgated by novelists and explorers (including a few from National Geographic, truth be told), even as native peoples were conquered and colonized. Despite its inaccuracy, the romantic image endures, perhaps more so now on an always-plugged-in planet. ¶ So the rise of tourism to tribal areas is no surprise. Click on almost any adventure travel site and stereotypical images pop up, from smiling long-necked Padaung women in Myanmar to the “lost world”

Pemon Indians of Venezuela. One popular tour company even advertises, “We will search for tribes that have had limited or no contact with Westerners.” Although there are estimates that about a hundred “uncontacted” tribes still exist in the world, no one really knows for sure. What we do know is that encounters between outsiders and indigenous peoples have rarely gone well for the latter.

Last year, 30,000 tourists poured into Ethiopia’s Omo River Valley to see the Mursi and their seminomadic indigenous cousins before “modern development” overtakes them. The problem is that providing for adventure-seekers—with vehicles, restaurants, accommodations, and other tourism services—prompts the very changes they wish to avoid. Is it possible for the well-intentioned traveler to experience tribal culture without destroying it?

From the Kogi of Colombia to the Huli Wigmen of Papua New Guinea, many of the world’s last surviving tribal peoples—already under pressure from profit-hungry industries like timber, mining, and oil—also face tourism’s march across Earth. I’m a strong believer that tourism can be a powerful force for good, when planned well. If done badly, however, the consequences are sobering: Despite a government ban on tribal tourism in India’s Andaman Islands, during peak season last July dozens of vehicles filled with camera-wielding travelers snaked into a forest reserve set aside for the Jarawa, hunter-gatherers who began to emerge cautiously from

the jungle in ones and twos during the late 1990s, and who now number fewer than 400. A video showed corrupt police making girls dance in front of cameras, and candy and biscuits being tossed out of tour bus windows to naked Jarawa children.

“For many tourists, visiting tribal communities is a way to experience life very different from their own. But tribes are not there for the photo-snapping entertainment of adventure travelers. What they need is to have their land and way of life protected, along with the right to say no to tourism,” says Stephen Corry, director for London-based Survival International, a tribal rights advocacy group.

And yet, many tribal groups are actually saying yes to tourism, seeing it as an opportunity for economic and other benefits for their people. Listen to Mamo Santos, a Kogi elder I met in Colombia’s Sierra Nevada. Standing serenely beside a grass-roofed house, he surveyed a parade of tourists navigating muddy trails in the jungle. They were bound for Ciudad Perdida—the no-longer-lost stone city cloaked in lianas that was built by his ancestors to escape Spanish conquistadores. “If our little brothers can help protect nature, which is sacred to us, and regain access to our spiritual sites on land that was taken, we welcome them,” he told me. “Little brothers,” I discovered, is how the Kogi refer to outsiders, including tourists.

“Indigenous societies and tourism rarely get along well, but when they do, it is the result of tribal leaders empowered to make decisions that are best for their own people,” says anthropologist Wade Davis, a National Geographic explorer-in-residence.

Given the potential for tourism to harm as well as help, indigenous people are reaching out to one another. The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers in the United States, which represents Native American groups, published a step-by-step Tribal Tourism Toolkit (step number three is instructive: “assess the hopes and horrors”). And last year, the newly

formed World Indigenous Tourism Alliance collaborated with the Adventure Travel Trade Association to facilitate a dialogue between tour operators and indigenous peoples. One conclusion: Indigenous communities need to be treated as equals in any discussion of tourism, with the power to decide whether and how to balance their priorities with the desires of visitors.

There are positive examples to build on. The Inuit of Nunavik, Canada, have set up carefully monitored tours that allow visitors to experience authentic Inuit culture, including throat singing and foraging for wild foods, while providing jobs and promoting ethnic pride among the youth. In Kenya, where the Maasai have had decades of trial-and-error with tourism, the tribe owns Campi Ya Kanzi, an award-winning eco-lodge in a wilderness reserve on communal land. The Maasai get direct economic benefits, and visitors learn about an age-old way of life while helping to safeguard it. Done this way—by the indigenous people, for the indigenous people—tribal tourism is worth your support. As Mamo Santos said: On our terms, we welcome you. ■



A Papua New Guinea send-off at Goroka airport.

COSTAS CHRIST writes about the changing world of travel. E-mail him through travel_talk@ngs.org.



The iron-and-glass San Miguel market buzzes all day long with patrons enjoying local fare from more than 30 vendors.

Real Madrid

SPAIN'S CAPITAL CITY TAKES THE PRIZE WITH ARTWORK, TAPAS, AND NIGHTLIFE

By LISA ABEND

IT'S NOT FOR NOTHING that Madrid is located in the exact geographic center of Spain. The capital has always been the place where the rest of the country's regions are represented—which means it's home to flamenco as stirring as in Seville and fish as fresh as in Vigo. But in the past decade or so, immigration and other factors have made the capital a more sophisticated place, with a diverse population, a burgeoning contemporary art scene, a greater number of green spaces for walking, some of the finest ethnic restaurants in the country, and an unparalleled nightlife. And yet, in its corners, you can still find small-town flavor and local traditions. "We're very cosmopolitan and open-minded now," says Rosa Rivas, a reporter for *El País* newspaper and a fourth-generation madrileña. "But we still like to keep our ties to our little neighborhoods."

DAY ONE

MORNING *Wander Among Masterpieces*

Begin your day in the Golden Triangle of Art in the heart of the city. Each of Madrid's three major art museums (all within walking distance of each other) is a jewel, from the **Prado** with its major Velázquez and Goya canvases; to the **Reina Sofía**, with its modernist prize of Picasso's "Guernica"; to the **Thyssen-Bornemisza**, with its idiosyncratic collection, including Fra Angelico and Marc Chagall. But the museum collections are so immense that you could spend all day doing nothing but masterpiece gazing and still not make a dent. Better to focus on one museum—perhaps the Prado's room 67 with Goya's disturbing "black paintings."

AFTERNOON *One-of-a-Kind Tastemakers*

Changing tastes and Spain's economic hardships have led many of the country's

top chefs to pursue alternatives to fine dining. **Estado Puro**, run by Paco Roncero (who trained under Ferran Adrià) is one of the better efforts, both for its sleek decor (flamenco haircombs, called *peinetas*, line the walls and ceiling) and for its delicious tapas. A mix of traditional plates, like crisp cod fritters, and more modern ones, like crave-worthy sliders with caramelized onions, makes for a perfect lunch. The well-manicured streets of the **Barrio de Salamanca** offer no shortage of Prada, Manolo Blahnik, and their ilk. But on the other side of the Paseo de la Castellana, the funkier **Barrio de las Salesas** plays SoHo to Salamanca's Fifth Avenue. At **Theorema**, designer Mimma Anelli creates one-of-a-kind evening frocks that range from whimsical to drop-dead elegant. **My Room Zapatos** sells tri-toned suede oxfords and fur-trimmed handbags in a room that looks like the



attic of a well-loved bohemian aunt. Any shopping-induced drops in blood sugar can be assuaged with a *dulce de leche* tart or raspberry *macaron* at **Mamá Framboise**.

EVENING *A Nightcap With a View*

When you're ready for a break from tapas, the most exciting trend in Madrid dining right now is the explosion of high-end ethnic restaurants. One of the best—and possibly the top Mexican restaurant in all of Europe—is the newly opened **Punto MX**. In addition to tortillas made fresh to order and guacamole prepared tableside, chef Roberto Ruiz turns out flavorful, authentic specialties like roasted shredded pork atop black-bean stuffed tortillas called *panuchos* and duck enchiladas in green pumpkin-seed sauce. If it's an early night (closing time is midnight), the terrace on top of the wedding-cake **Cibeles Palace** offers spectacular views of the city with glasses of cava. Open later, **Ramses** draws Madrid's beautiful people to sip gin and tonics (Spain's cocktail of the moment) either outdoors on a veranda that overlooks the illuminated Alcalá Arch on Independence Square or in the baroque black-and-silver spaces designed by Philippe Starck.

DAY TWO

MORNING *Royal Digs*

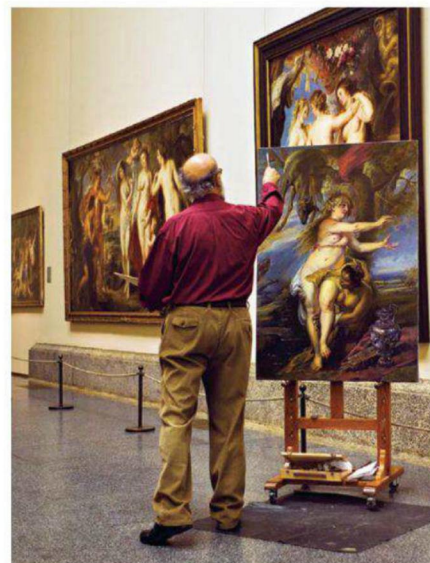
Start the day in the **Barrio de los Austrias**, the part of the city built by the Habsburg monarchs when they made Madrid the capital of Spain. **Café del Oriente**, good for pastries and *café con leche*, is one of the city's grand cafés, complete with gilded bar, velvet banquettes, and elderly gentlemen working their way through newspapers. On the other side of the flower-filled



Plaza de Oriente, the **Royal Palace** (open to visitors) is an exercise in old-world lavishness, with priceless paintings by Velázquez and Caravaggio, ornate furniture, and a pharmacy filled with ceramic jars storing medicinal plants. A more intimate experience awaits at the **Goya Pantheon** in the San Antonio de Florida Chapel, where the great painter created marvelous frescoes on the chapel's ceiling, and where he is now entombed. For lunch, the **San Miguel market** is a snacking paradise that offers a variety of delicious bites. Stalls sell everything from ruby slices of *jamón ibérico* to paper cones filled with crisp-fried baby squid; locals and visitors alike crowd convivially around the tables in the center.

AFTERNOON *Park Pleasures*

In 2011, the city inaugurated **Madrid Río**, a six-mile-long, lush park designed for strolling that was developed from an old ring road along the Manzanares River. There are places to rent bikes and kayaks, and a café. At the eastern end of the park, **Matadero Madrid** is perhaps the city's most intriguing cultural space, offering art exhibitions and



A day in Madrid begins with art at the Prado (above), followed by an outdoor performance at the Matadero (top left) and tapas at Estado Puro (left).

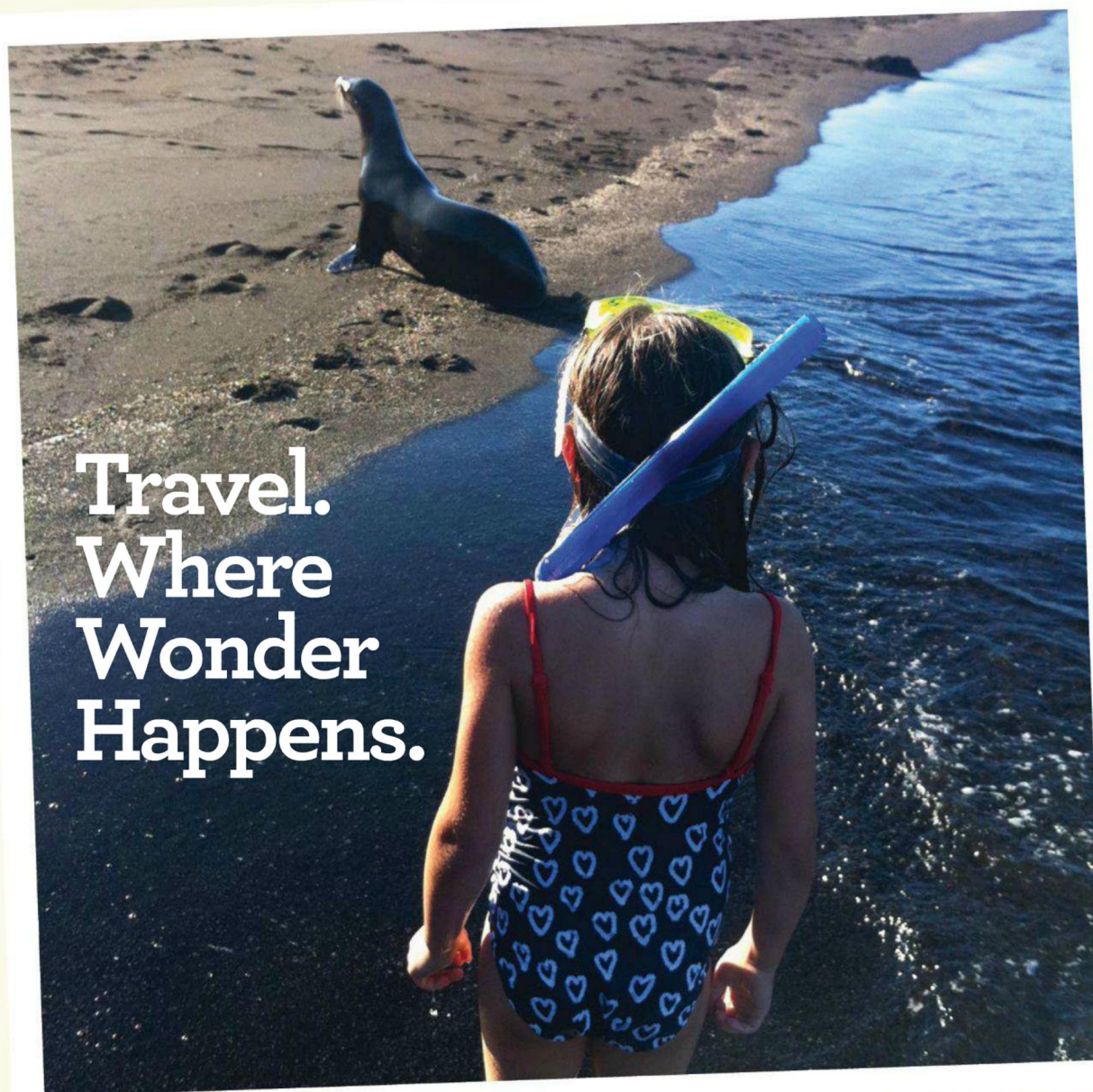
concerts in its complex of striking Moorish-industrial buildings that were once Madrid's livestock market and slaughterhouse. Jordi Colomer's video installation, "Prohibido Cantar" ("No Singing"), about how cities spring up, fills the space that was once a walk-in refrigerator.

EVENING *Into the Night*

"When people think about Spanish food today they think it's all about these crazy techniques and combinations," says chef Juanjo López. "But there's another side that is about getting the best ingredients and respecting them." At López's restaurant, the tiny **La Tasquita de Enfrente**, he does just that, barely poaching teardrop-size peas to bring out their sweetness, and lightly crusting a piece of skate before slaking it in a piquant sauce of brown butter and capers. Madrid is a city famous for its nightlife, and the adjoining neighborhoods of **Chueca** and **Malasaña** are the epicenter of it. Indie music at the hipster **Zombie Bar** is provided by the locally famous **Zombie Kids**; the kitsch **TupperWare** bar (with 1950s and '60s memorabilia) has been an old-school favorite for decades. **El Junco**, a laid-back, intimate jazz club, draws aficionados for its live performances most nights, and the stalwart **Pacha** still brings in the late-night club kids eager to dance. End the night the way madrileños do, with sugary churros and hot chocolate at the 24-hour **Chocolatería San Ginés**, preferably just as the sun is coming up. ■

JUST IN

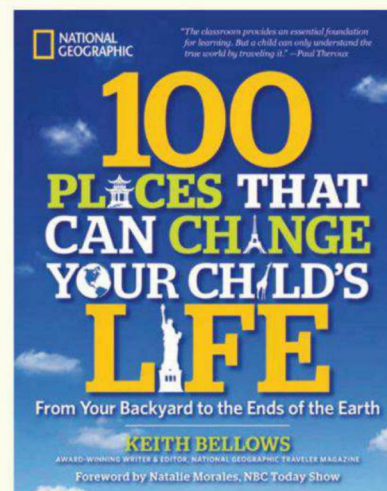
The Real Madrid soccer team plays year-round in the **Santiago Bernabéu Stadium**, located north of central Madrid (take the metro). If you can't score tickets, then walk down the players' tunnel and snap a photo on the team's bench during a tour (offered daily) of the 85,454-seat stadium. After victorious games, local fans celebrate at the **Cibeles Fountain**, where the team's flag is wrapped around the mother goddess statue of Cibeles.



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MACKENZIE BELLOWES IN THE GALÁPAGOS. PHOTO: KEITH BELLOWES

The best way to raise kids to be curious about the world is to **show it to them**. Journey with *National Geographic Traveler* Editor in Chief **KEITH BELLOWES** and his family to visit 100 of the world's greatest destinations, from America's national parks to the Galápagos Islands to your own backyard. This book provides some of **the world's top places for kids** (and the adults in their life)—including insightful insider tips and advice. You'll also find great ideas to supplement your travels—foods, music, films—and carefully curated lists of **kid-friendly activities**, all designed to give your kids the wonder of travel.

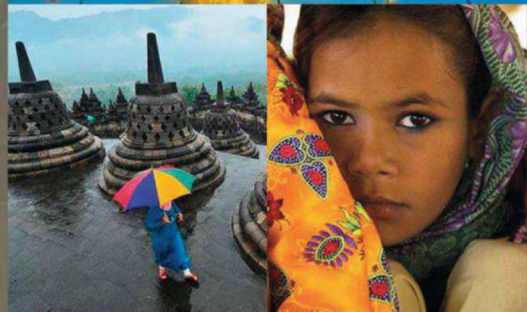


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Making History in Philly

A KIDS FREE-FOR-ALL AROUND INDEPENDENCE HALL

1. Ponder whether the sun carved into the back of Gen. George Washington's chair inside Independence Hall is rising or setting (Benjamin Franklin wondered as much during the Constitutional Convention in 1787). **2.** Sneak down Bladen's Court, a secret passageway off Elfreth's Alley, and listen for the ghosts of two Loyalists hanged during the Revolution. **3.** Go to St. Peter's Church cemetery in Society Hill to make grave rubbings of notable Philadelphians. **4.** Mail a postcard to yourself from the B. Free Franklin post office, where clerks hand-cancel stamps with a colonial-era postmark. **5.** Pretend you're in the *Brady Bunch* (or at least find out what shag carpet is) at Jones, a paean to '70s decor and home to some groovy mac and cheese. **6.** Duck into the Curtis Center to gaze at "Dream Garden," the luminous mosaic made of some 100,000 pieces of Tiffany glass. **7.** See how a clove drop and a peppermint Gibraltar—two early 20th-century confections made at Shane Candies—measure up to their modern counterparts. **8.** Putt through the crack in the Liberty Bell at the Philly-themed miniature golf course at Franklin Square. **9.** Walk across a huge map of the city, which spans an entire gallery floor at the newly reopened Philadelphia History Museum. **10.** Book a tour or stay overnight on the WWII-era battleship *New Jersey* (take the ferry from Penn's Landing). —CAROLINE TIGER



The miniature golf course at Franklin Square depicts the city's historic landmarks.



Safari-style tents at Dromquinna Manor offer creature comforts and views of Kenmare Bay in County Kerry.

Ireland's Green Scene

BOUTIQUE CAMPING IN THE EMERALD ISLE

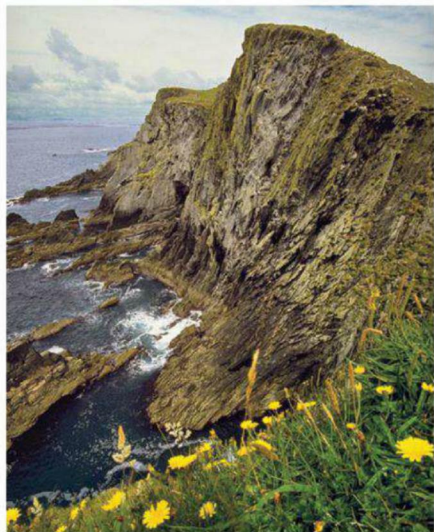
By KATHY MANGAN

IRELAND'S NOTORIOUSLY "soft" weather makes the fields gloriously green, but it also makes the ground soggy for would-be campers seeking to experience nature in dramatic landscapes off the beaten path. Leave it to Irish ingenuity and hospitality to adapt the camping experience with refined yurts, pods, and safari tents outfitted with duvet-covered beds, antique furniture, and woodstoves. Since the economic crash, savvy entrepreneurs have seen new demand for nature experiences away from the tourist trail. They've set boutique camping sites in secluded spots where permanent structures might be out of place, with access to outdoor adventures and on-site enticements like a wine bar, marina, or pub. Although you won't get a hot Irish breakfast, there are plenty of rainbow sightings and other photo opportunities.

SHORELINE CHIC No one knows posh indulgence like **Dromquinna Manor** owner John Brennan, also a partner in the five-star Park Hotel Kenmare with brother Francis. So it's no surprise that the safari tents on the 40-acre property fronting Kenmare Bay have reading lamps, plush towels, a welcome basket of snacks, and custom "wilderness beds" crafted from local fallen logs and topped with goose down comforters. Guests enjoy horseback riding from Dromquinna Stables and cruising the bay to the seal colony aboard *Seafari*, which departs right at the pier. The food is upscale too, with croissants and cappuccino in the shop for breakfast, wine and artisan cheese for afternoon noshing, and the Boathouse Wine Bar and Bistro offering tapas and grilled pizza along the waterfront. "There's a massive appetite for something different," says Brennan. "This type of camping attracts

couples and families who want to be in nature but don't want to slumber on the ground in a sleeping bag." From \$165.

SCULPTURE PARK Situated in Ireland's midlands north of Kilbeggan, **Boutique Camping** is part outdoor art installation and part upscale camping site. The 100-acre property is the creation of owner Adrian Murphy, who transformed the rolling farmland by installing roads and walking trails, planting more than 200,000 trees with clearings for the yurts and shepherd's huts, building two shared kitchens and an eating deck, and carefully placing works of art to encourage discovery. A circle of standing stones carved with Celtic symbols tops a two-tiered mound; a group of totem poles overlook the pond; druids and mythical figures emerge from massive tree trunks. Iron beds, woodstoves, and the dreamy effect of



Dandelions hug the cliffs of Cape Clear Island off the southern tip of Ireland.

candles set the night scene. “I’ll never be done adding to the property,” says Murphy. “I wouldn’t have any fun then.” From \$128.

GLAMPING AND GUINNESS After a day of boating, fishing, or hiking, what could be more satisfying than a pint of ale in an atmospheric pub while listening to a traditional music session? At **Battlebridge Caravan and Camping Park** near Leitrim, 100 miles northwest of Dublin, the pub is right on-site. When Joe and Eilish Beirne took over the family’s Battlebridge Pub along the Shannon River, they developed a marina and campsites but soon realized people wanted even more conveniences and pampering. They added carnival-style tents with wooden beds, chandeliers, and linen service, plus four wooden pods that look like upside-down boat hulls and a deck overlooking the river. You can rent a boat for a day or book a weeklong camping-boating package. From \$230 for two nights.

ISLAND OUTPOST It takes 45 minutes on a small ferry to get to Cape Clear Island, one of Ireland’s most remote inhabited islands, off the south coast of West Cork. Guests walk over the hill to **Chléire Haven**, where eight canvas yurts (and teepees) cling to the edge of a 30-foot bluff overlooking South Harbor. They feature stunning Atlantic views, comfortable beds, gas stoves, cooking utensils, and solar-powered lighting. Co-owners Dave Calvert and Sally Davies recommend weeklong stays to take in the nearby heritage museum and bird observatory, go kayaking or whale watching, and check out a 5,000-year-old burial chamber entered through a tunnel passage. Off-island adventures include a cruise to Fastnet Rock to explore a century-old granite lighthouse. From \$105. ■

Swiss Dish

SHARING THE GOOEY PLEASURES OF RACLETTE

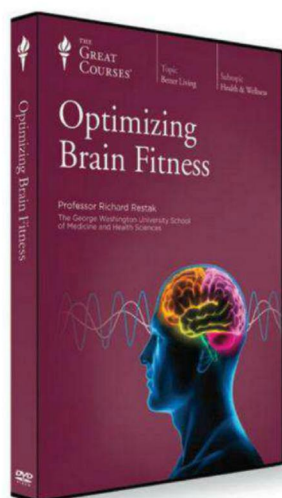
A LONG WITH WATCHES and chocolate, cheese is one of Switzerland’s great treasures, and raclette—both a semifirm cheese and a stick-to-your-ribs dish—is an Alpine gem that remains little known outside this country’s borders. Raclette comes from cows that munch on short blades of high-altitude grass. This imparts the unique, earthy flavor to the unpasteurized cheese similar to the impact of terroir on wine. Centuries ago, the mountain herders from the Valais region of southern Switzerland would gather around a fire and place a wedge of raclette nearby until the exposed edge began to melt. When it did, they would scrape it onto potatoes and cornichons for a hearty meal. Today, the dish is made by placing the cheese on an electric melter that resembles a small grill, but the social aspect of the meal persists. “Sharing raclette is a time for friends to gather together, drink wine, and have fun,” says Zermatt native Amadé Perrig. For an authentic experience, come to Zermatt, which sits in the shadow of the Matterhorn and serves as a top destination for skiers and climbers. You’ll swoosh or trudge into a lunch spot like **Chez Vrony**, one of the mountain huts tucked in between the trails, and warm yourself with raclette. Or head to the rustic **Whymper-Stube**, where locals linger over plates of charcuterie, raclette, and enough wine that you may be inspired to yodel. —KELLY DINARDO



Soul-satisfying, melted raclette blankets a plate of boiled potatoes and cornichons.

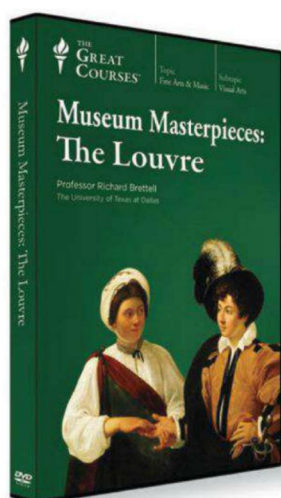


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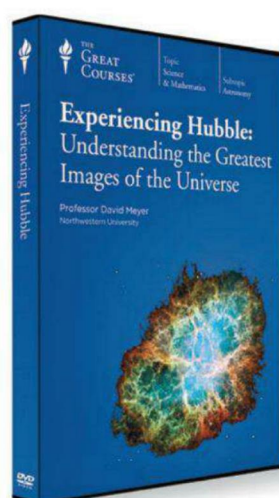
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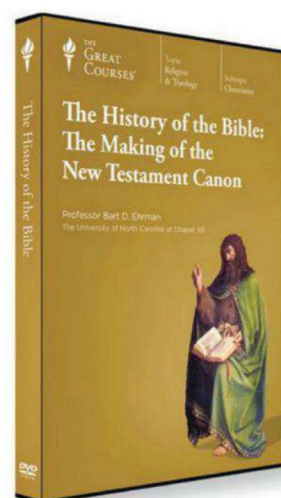
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TEXAS

Makes Me Happy

Thrown by life, a woman drives south—where fresh perspective gets her back in the saddle

By KATE SIBER



*A horseback rider near
Terlingua, Texas.*



LONG, STRAIGHT, EMPTY ROAD is the best tonic for melancholy. This I learn in West Texas.

On an otherwise forgettable, sun-bleached week in April, a decided-by-the-hour route leads me from my home in Durango, Colorado, through New Mexico, gravitating south almost instinctively. When I reach a crossroads—a sign for El Paso—I turn left, toward Texas. Perhaps

some part of me knows that the sprawling skies and deserts of West Texas are uniquely suited to rebooting the brain. And that is precisely what I need. Over the dark winter months, a faceless depression had suffused my life, threatening to take up permanent residence. But here on the faithful road, just as the landscape turns harsh and veiled with the dust of spring winds, I start to feel the promise of a cure.

The weather warms, and the wind kicks up. I start to wake up. I stop fiddling with the radio and turn it off. I watch as the landscape—a thousand browns, yellows, and the unbroken blue of the sky—stages a procession of small dramas. The grasses turn gold with sunset, and the Union Pacific clanks by with its big yellow cars. Rocky hills relent to flatlands, cows dot the vast monochrome like porcelain figurines, and abandoned farmsteads cling to the land as reminders of past hope. The uncluttered landscape invites my mind to do the same.

I roll through an old ranching and railroad town, Marfa, now popular among artists, where galleries inhabit 1950s gas stations and turn-of-the-century storefronts.

"This is where the trouble happens," says a man nursing a pint as I slide onto a barstool at Padre's, a dark cavern of a bar with rows of tequila. He smiles. He introduces himself as Carlos, and his friend as Rico.

"How'd you get here?" asks Rico.

"I got in my car and just wound up here." My explanation seems utterly inadequate, but they nod, satisfied. Stranger things must happen in Marfa, where the expanse of desert beyond the movie-set-like facades allows a freedom of mind untenable elsewhere. Even the bar's motley assortment of patrons—a leathery wire of a cowboy, skinny hipsters in ironic T-shirts, a handful of stone-faced farmhands—reflects the town's live-and-let-live attitude. I feel strangely peaceful.

Now nearly 700 miles from home with no reservations or places to be, I decide to camp in a field for the night. Alone in the darkness, under the ghostly light of an almond moon, I could easily spook myself. After all, just outside town, mysterious glowing orbs—the unexplained Marfa Lights—have unnerved visitors for decades. But instead, a surprise: I feel just fine.

Desperation had spurred my hasty departure a few days earlier. The winter had been tough: My career as a writer felt stalled, I struggled with back pain from a yoga injury, and a breakup with my boyfriend of four years left me drained and morose. At a time when I felt I should have things in order, the disarray of my life's great themes overwhelmed me. That uncertainty left me grappling for control. I needed to loosen up. I decided to practice letting go on the road—to take a trip without the comfort of a single plan. If nothing else, a change of scenery might be a temporary palliative. Before I could change my mind, I cleared 19 days of my calendar, crammed my car with food, clothes, books, and camping equipment, and set off.

In my first few days on the road, I catch myself looking for answers in a road atlas. It dawns on me that in order to truly let go, I must simply accept whatever comes my way, whether beautiful or boring. So I decide that every time I come to a major fork in the highway, I will pick a direction like picking a straw out of a hat.

In Terlingua, Texas, a revived ghost town on the edge of Big Bend

National Park, I linger to chat with a shopkeeper. She says it's a shame I came this year; the dust and cold killed the spring flowers before they'd even bloomed. No rain had come in nine months, and the smoke from 150,000 acres of wildfire darkens the air. But I've never been here before, I tell her, and with no expectations, I think it's gorgeous.

South of a wide swath of bland desert, Big Bend is a prize of rivers, mountains, canyons, and big wildlife, including bears and mountain lions. But I don't know any of that yet. I simply spot it on my map one day and point south. As I drive the improbably spiky Chisos Mountains, day softens to evening, shrouding the cliffs in an ethereal haze. I claim the campground's last site, cook dinner on my stove, and sip tea as the sun sets over a pair of toothy peaks. The campground eventually stills to silence, interrupted only by the cooing of a distant dove and the occasional *thrush* of the wind through the trees.

Serendipitously, the next day I run into an acquaintance from college, Derek, on the Lost Mine Trail. I persuade him to join me on a mission that evening: a full-moon hike to the Langford Hot Springs on the Rio Grande, a series of large pools that collect in the foundations of a long-gone early 20th-century bathhouse. Setting off from the trailhead at sunset, we see no other souls except several distant javelinas as we enter a desertscape unlike any I've visited. The plants—prickly pear, sotol, and ocotillo—are perfectly spaced as if set in the gravel by some unseen gardener.

After three miles, we arrive at the springs, strip to our swimsuits, and slip in, instantly melting into the steamy pools. In silence, we watch the full moon rise, reflecting on the river and casting ten-foot cactus shadows. We get to talking, idly, about our hopes for the next decade, for good health and fewer failed relationships and whatever fulfillments we haven't yet found. As our bodies marinate, the words wash lazily out of our minds, as if we are silently making a pact not to hold each other accountable.

On the way back, the wind dies and the moon shines a platinum floodlight over the landscape. The crunch of our footsteps in the gravel lulls me into a meditative trance.

Derek stops in his tracks. "Wait," he says. "Listen." Without our footfall, there is nothing but silence, deep and flawless. I hold my breath and listen intently for something, anything—the slam of a car door, the bark of a faraway dog. There is nothing. "It's almost as if we're suspended in a diorama," Derek says in a reverent whisper. I wonder if the silence is that much more wondrous because I had never dreamed or expected it.

The next day, as I drift farther east through the Texas borderlands along Highway 90, I realize that such moments could never be planned. And perhaps it is that insistence on controlling every aspect of life that prevents me from living all of it—the moments of





Texas rangers: A Chisos agave plant mimics Big Bend's spiky range of the same name (left); longhorn cattle dot the stark landscape (above); locals loiter outside a Marfa watering hole (below, right); Marfa's water tower strikes a pose (below, left).





Route 67: straight shot to the heart of Texas.

joy, amazement, fear, and doubt that constantly arrive and depart.

In San Antonio, a startlingly large city moated by malls and office plazas, I follow a sign for the Alamo, then splurge on a hotel room with an 11th-story view of the fortress cum tourist hive. That evening, I ramble along the River Walk, a strip of riverside restaurants and hotels in an arms race of lights, candy-colored umbrellas, and thumping pop music. Feeling a twinge of loneliness, I stop to watch the water glitter with reflections—and notice movement. Two ducks, and eight ducklings the size and shape of pears, flutter in a jumble of downy feathers. I wonder how much time I spend not noticing life as it happens.

In their best moments, spontaneous trips offer a view of a place otherwise hidden when you're willing to see only its most beautiful parts. In an El Paso Walmart, I watched a plain-faced woman in soldier fatigues stop to contemplate a rack of pretty lipsticks. In Big Bend, I lounged in the hot shade with an old cowboy on an impromptu holiday from Carrizo Springs, Texas. "Isn't it nice to be on your own?" he says, reading my mind. "If I was home my wife'd have me on a tractor plowin' some field."

Of course, many moments of unsystematic trips are not beautiful or noteworthy. I ate iceberg lettuce salads in plastic bowls at lonely truck stops in Sanderson and Three Rivers. A merciless wildfire

chased me out of Balmorhea State Park in West Texas. ("Get out of here as fast as you can," deadpanned a ranger.) One day, I steered through an apocalyptic scene near Pecos, scarred by oil and gas machinery and choked with dust.

But just as unceremoniously as they arrive, those unlovely places give way to something new. Nearing the Gulf Coast, I realize I can let the landscape, whether wild and open or strangled by development, simply pass through me in all its beauty or shame. And with that understanding, the uncertainty of the road brings me unexpected comfort.

In Corpus Christi, I drive through a sprawling atrocity of strip malls lined with EZ Pawns, payday loan shops, Mexican restaurants named El Paraiso, and churches with neon signs: Jesus Saves. Then, suddenly, as if someone flicked off the lights, the towering signs disappear and there is nothing but highway embraced by black—the ocean. I cross the causeway, and soon I'm sailing through the waving grasses and pristine sand dunes of the Gulf Coast's undeveloped Padre Island, the wind a howl against my windows, the sky dark and infinite.

KATE SIBER clocked more than 3,000 miles on her 19-day solo road trip. She wrote about Maine's Rangeley Lake for *Traveler* in June/July 2012.

SOUTH TEXAS PIT STOPS

Balmorhea State Park Pull off here for a dip in one of the world's largest spring-fed pools.

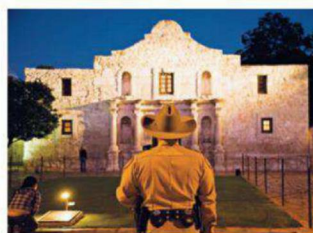
Padre's The local scene makes this dark old tavern in Marfa worth ducking into. Regulars recommend tacos from Food Shark food truck.

Chinati Foundation museum Sculptor Donald Judd put Marfa on

the art map with the 1980s creation of this landmark. Tours are required and offer a history primer.

Garner State Park Take a break at this popular camping park to cool off in the refreshing Frio River.

Menger Bar Across from the Alamo (right), this San Antonio spot where Teddy Roosevelt gathered the



Rough Riders is often a surprisingly quiet place to enjoy a margarita.

Fredericksburg Detour into Texas Hill Country for wineries, tasting rooms, and farm stands.

Padre Island Drive or walk south into 70 miles of white-sand dunes that stretch to the end of this wild barrier island.



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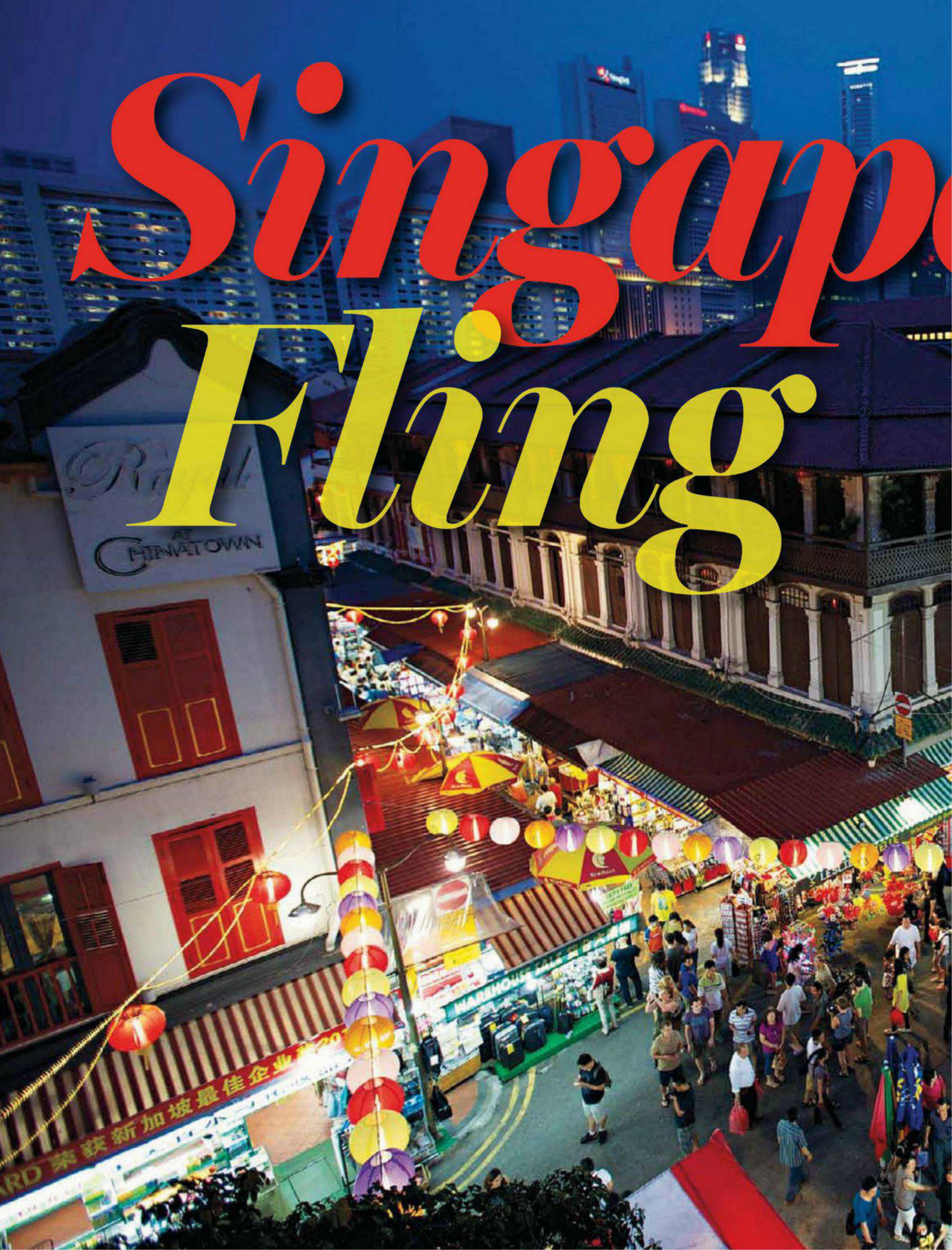


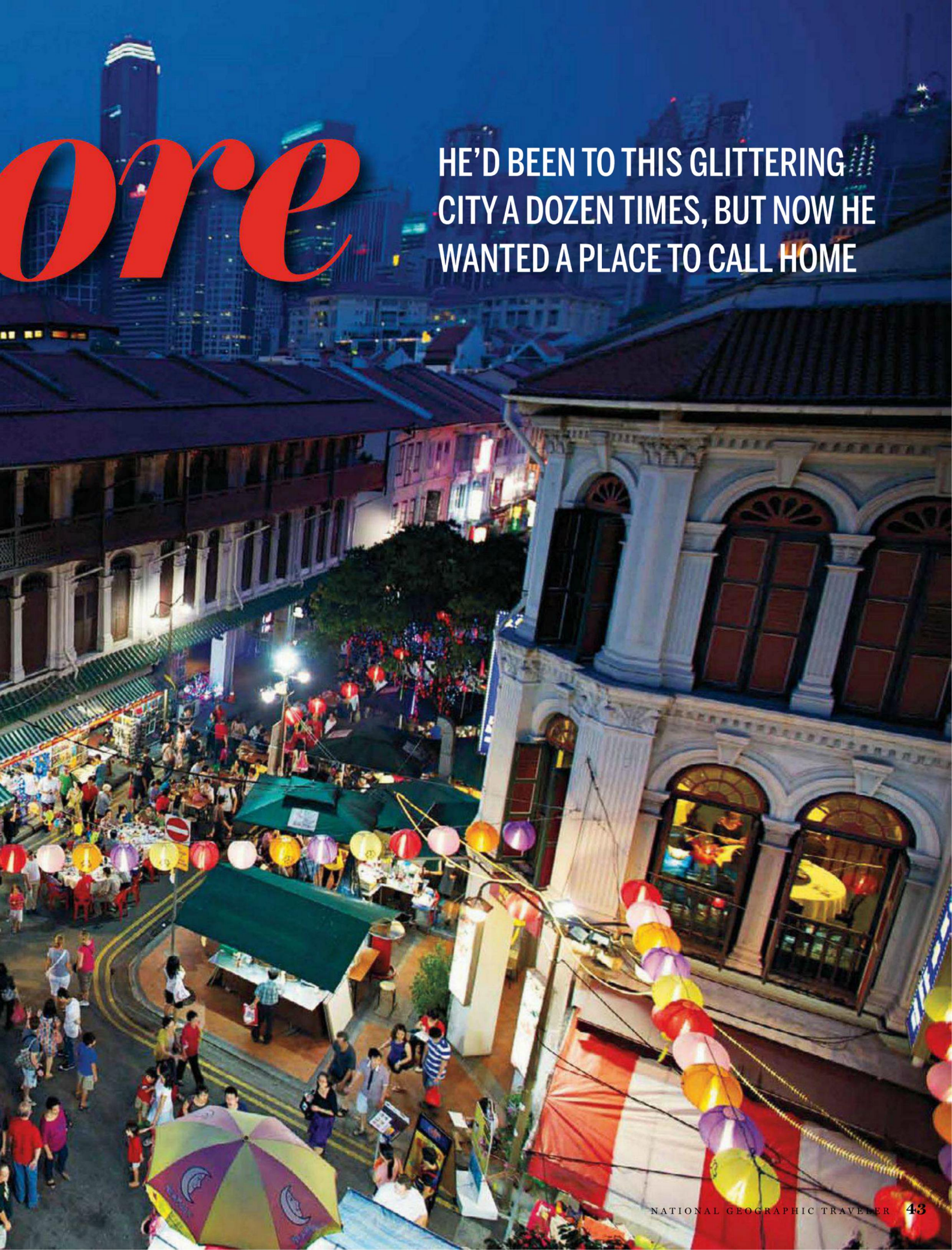
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EX-L V-6 Sedan model with available navigation shown. PZEV (Partial Zero-Emission Vehicle) models as certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) are available in California and states that have adopted California Zero-Emission Vehicle regulations. © 2012 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

Singapore Fling





ore

HE'D BEEN TO THIS GLITTERING
CITY A DOZEN TIMES, BUT NOW HE
WANTED A PLACE TO CALL HOME

BY *P.F. Kluge*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Palani Mohan*

The house I've dreamed of is waiting for me behind a locked gate. I press the buzzer twice. No one answers.

I wave at a worker repairing the driveway, and he ducks inside to find a maid.

The house is one of Singapore's "black and white" Tudor Revival bungalows, anchored in the colonial past—the world of Somerset Maugham and Rudyard Kipling. I contemplate the white stucco walls and black creosoted beams that gave these dwellings their name. I take in the high ceilings, tall windows, generous verandas, fringe of trees. This is what I have been wanting. The British left behind thousands of black-and-whites when they left in 1963. Fewer than 300 remain. That's plenty, though. All I need is one.





Ringed by skyscrapers, Singapore's spouting "Merlion" offers a popular photo op. Opening pages: Garlands of paper lanterns add a celebratory note to nighttime Chinatown.

Singapore had me from the start, back in 1976: the heavy, warm air, the mix of neighborhoods, of people—Chinese, Indian, Malay, European—of cuisines, the layers of history, from colonialism to federation with Malaysia to independence as a city-state to, now, globalization. And location, location, location: Malaysia just across a bridge, Indonesia across the narrow Singapore Strait, Thailand 300 miles to the north, India and Sri Lanka to the west.

I've come here a dozen times now. I've arrived by ship from India, by ferry from Indonesia, and by plane from Australia, the Philippines, and now Ohio. I know Singapore has changed over the years. So have I. But I can't shake the feeling that there ought to be a Singapore chapter in my life, something that would make me a resident, not a visitor—someone who lives in a house, not a hotel room, who could begin a sentence by saying, "When I lived in Singapore..."

On the morning of my latest arrival in Singapore, I find myself in Gleneagles Hospital. I watch mothers carrying babies, patients being pushed in wheelchairs, old-timers being guided to tests and appointments. I'm feeling fine, though. What I'm doing is choosing breakfast. Where else but in Singapore would a hospital have a dining area dishing out Malaysian stews, barbecued duck, tropical fruits—papaya, pineapple, mango, sliced or juiced—and French baguettes? In the days that follow I will have roti in Little India and oyster omelets in Chinatown, \$3 meals that, like the city itself, are savory and safe. The array of cuisines, the availability of ingredients from around the world, the range of offerings from street stalls to tony restaurants guarantee that in Singapore I'm happy three times a day.

Make it four. In a hole-in-the-wall in Singapore's Chinatown I've discovered a fellow who specializes in turning papayas, star fruits, mangoes, jackfruits, Malay apples, pineapples, and bananas into juice. My favorite is creamy, citrusy soursop. As soon as he sees me coming down the alley, my man starts peeling, cutting, grinding. His English is poor, but he routinely asks me where I've been. If I skip a day, he says he missed me.

Full from my breakfast, I go for a walk in a favorite place, the Singapore Botanic Gardens, where I find people practicing tai chi, doing calisthenics, and perfecting dance steps to Chinese and Western music coming out of boomboxes as they follow the lead of an instructor. All sorts of Singaporeans share the place. Filipina nannies propel baby carriages down garden paths, Muslim women in shawls admire exotic flowers, Chinese and expat visitors pause by tree-rimmed Swan Lake. I wander past ponds, gazebos, and thickets of bamboo until 8:30 a.m., when—not a moment too soon—the National Orchid Garden opens. Orchids by the hundreds bloom here, including VIP orchids named for Nelson Mandela and British royals William and Kate. As I stroll a corridor lined with the flowers, I am filled with admiration. In Singapore, orchids are not merely collected, they're perfected—a thousand hybrids so far—epitomes of a place where the effort to improve things never stops.

The Botanic Gardens, like the venerable Raffles Hotel and the boutiques along Orchard Road, are a must for anyone who visits Singapore. The difference, after this morning in the gardens, is that now I want to stay. Who wouldn't want to be here every morning?

WHEN ARIANE NABARRO moved to Singapore from France with her banker husband 16 years ago, she swore she would never live in a house that was anything like the old black-and-white cottage she

welcomes me to today. "I made it clear that I wouldn't cohabit with ants and cockroaches and geckos," she tells me, "even though they eat mosquitoes." So she and her husband spent their first couple of years in an apartment, convenient and anonymous. Then her husband's job disappeared, taking with it the right to continue to reside in Singapore. They left. Soon afterward, another position opened and they returned. This time her husband persuaded her to try a century-old residence. On her first night alone there, she awoke to find a frog sharing the house. Alarmed, she telephoned a Singaporean friend, asking what to do. The frog was a good omen, the friend reassured her. She'd be happy in her new home for a long time. Twelve years later, she agrees.

"This is the kind of place that makes you dream," she says. "It has a connection with the past, with the British officers and officials who preceded us in the house, and in Singapore itself." She now says good morning to squirrels and birds, although, she concedes, something had to be done about the python living under the deck ringing the swimming pool.

In a city that relentlessly renovates and reinvents itself, her house has endured. "Since I have lived here," she tells me, "most of my friends have moved at least twice. Rents increase. Buildings are demolished." She pauses. "In fact, ask Singaporeans where they were born, and most will just shrug. The homes they spent their childhoods in have been replaced with new structures. Young people don't dream of living in a house like this. They want to have a condo with a pool and gym."

She has a point. The Singapore I fell in love with nearly 40 years ago did not stand still, awaiting my return. High-rise condos and skyscraping corporate headquarters staked their claim. But the past sticks around. As Nabarro walks me through her home, along cool tiled floors, I note lots of windows framing the large, high-ceilinged rooms. Verandas open out from both floors. I easily can picture myself in the house, adopting the living patterns that Nabarro describes: a late afternoon drink and swim, then dinner on the porch, followed by a nightcap. I imagine friends coming to visit, just in from Angkor Wat or Bali, Lhasa or Louangphrabang, telling stories, savoring the soft, cool Singapore night. I picture myself going to bed under a ceiling fan, maybe a mosquito net, and looking forward to the next morning's amble in the Botanic Gardens.



Orchids—speckled, smooth, striped—are a highlight at Singapore's Botanic Gardens.

A GAGGLE OF KIDS, parents, and nannies waits around a Christmas tree outside the Tanglin Shopping Centre as I amble by. The song "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" fills the air. Snow will fall at 7:30 p.m. sharp. As the moment approaches, kids are helped into tiny bathing suits. Right on schedule, two machines on either side of the Christmas tree begin spewing foamy white stuff onto the ground, a billowing pile of... could it be... snow? What I touch is warm; what I smell is soapy. It's as though two washers, overloaded with detergent, are erupting. The kids jump in.

I've experienced my share of tropical Christmases, and they can disappoint those of us accustomed to snow. But I like the buzz of shopping here on Orchard Road—the eager crowds, the miles of blue Christmas lights that turn the avenue into a magic tunnel, the efficient gift wrapping at the stores. And, this being Singapore, the hoopla will be followed by a very different kind of holiday—the Tamil festival of Thaipusam, a "walk of faith" in which hundreds of Hindus parade through this bristlingly modern metropolis bearing



Locals prepare to worship in the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple (above), a sumptuous venue that opened in 2007 and includes a Buddhist culture museum. Bold colors and playful designs enliven facades (below) in the vibrant Little India neighborhood.



kavadis (pieces of wood symbolizing burdens) as a sign of devotion.

I know lots of towns where Christmas happens. And I assume there are as many that celebrate Thaipusam. Yet where else but Singapore will you find Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Europeans celebrating both?

I HAVE OLD SINGAPOREAN FRIENDS, constant travelers with whom I've shared meals in New York, Los Angeles, and—the acid test—my current hometown of Gambier, Ohio. In our early Singapore days we would take public buses to remote places that specialized in chili crab, bringing our own baguettes to soak up the tomato-chili sauce. Tonight is different. We meet at Infuzi, a French restaurant, small, stylish, costly. As we fork into plates of pasta with truffles, my friends catch me up on their life in Singapore. I sense their pride in Singapore's emergence as a world-class city. And I notice they seem less fascinated by the United States than before. They shrug at our gridlock and political stalemate, our party pendulum swinging left and right. They value Singapore's ability to plan and prosper.

The Singapore I fell in love with nearly 40 years ago did not stand still, awaiting my return.

They appreciate its stability—thanks to being a de facto one-party state—which enables it to undertake ambitious, decades-long projects: claiming land from sea, turning water from salt to fresh. Singaporeans invent orchids. They make high-tech electronics. They appreciate truffles. I decide not to bring up my search for a traditional house in Singapore; it will come off as quaint. I'll save my mission for another old friend.

Bob Beckman and I met in Micronesia, in the Peace Corps. The first time I traveled to Singapore, it was to visit him. He lived in another old Singapore house, long since destroyed. I remember a cupboard surrounded by screens to prevent rats from sharing the bread; its legs sat in cans of water to keep ants from ascending. I loved the place.

"I originally traveled to Asia," Beckman recalls, "because where I could land a job in the States I didn't want to live." Beckman got hired as an instructor at Singapore's National University Law School, a short-term contract that became a life's work, these days specializing in the law of the sea. He married a Singaporean, had three children, and became a citizen—an enthusiastic one at that. He is eager to show me his city's latest megaproject, the Marina Bay development. Its centerpiece is the Marina Bay Sands resort, three vaulting, curving towers that would dominate the skyline even if they weren't capped with a kind of spaceship—a "SkyPark" with palm trees, an infinity pool, shade umbrellas, and two restaurants. Beckman and I sense it vying for the same iconic status as Sydney's hallmark opera house. Hundreds of trees, in crates and burlap, are waiting to be planted to create an instant forest, part of a second major botanical garden—dubbed Gardens by the Bay—in a city just slightly bigger than Chicago.

We have lunch, chili crab, along the Singapore River at the Red





*Suspended animation:
Visitors walk a skyway
linking solar-powered
“supertrees” in the new
Gardens by the Bay park.*

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Souvenir of colonial days, a roomy black-and-white house (above) lingers behind a green tangle of vines. Coconut and curry flavor Singapore's hallmark noodle dish laksa (right), often cooked with shrimp. A game of Chinese chess (below) demands intense concentration from players and onlookers alike.



House Seafood Restaurant on Robertson Quay, where yesterday's dirty, cluttered wharves and warehouses have been replaced by bistros, brewpubs, patisseries, and chocolatiers. I liked the funky old waterfront—the dark alleys, the whiff of mystery—but what has replaced it is very congenial. The colonial past is a fading memory, but so is much of the geeky authoritarianism of the 1980s, with its campaigns against litter, long hair on men, chewing gum.

"It's been onward and upward since the '90s," Beckman remarks. "Singapore now attracts foreigners and keeps Singaporeans from leaving. There's a Singapore cachet. We're efficient, bright, and we want to be an intellectual center, a hub, a niche, a crossroads."

As I look around the restaurant, I notice that Beckman and I are the oldest people in the room. I confirm this in other places we pass, crowded with boisterous tables full of freshly minted M.B.A.s. It's not that they make me feel old. It's that they suggest I've waited too long to live my Singapore chapter. This is their town now, I guess, and my hunch is confirmed when Bob shows me his apartment, in a new building with a swimming pool the size of a soccer field. He tells me I must give up on a freestanding house like the one I visited and coveted. But I might find a nice apartment for around \$1.5 million.

That's about what I could get for my house in Ohio. If I sold it four times.

I'M WALKING IN KAMPONG GLAM, a Malay neighborhood that, like its counterparts of Chinatown and Little India, includes tailors, traditional carpet shops, and purveyors of herbal medicine along with recent arrivals such as gourmet ice-cream and coffee shops and wine bars. Not far from the neighborhood mosque I notice two restaurants, side by side. One offers barbecued fish for less than \$3, barbecued pork for less than \$2, vegetables for less than \$1. Its neighbor is advertising black-truffle omelets for \$20. If Singapore's history engages and its accomplishments impress, it's the food that seals the deal, all over town, and nowhere more than the Maxwell Road Hawker Centre, a nondescript, metal-roofed pavilion on the edge of Chinatown. You claim a table, leave a newspaper or umbrella or spouse behind to confirm your occupancy, and stroll from stall to stall, dozens of them, to choose among frog porridge, grilled fish, roasted duck, German pretzels, and signature dishes such as spicy *laksa* soup, Singapore chicken rice, and Indian mutton curry. I come to believe food, more than anything else, is the key to Singapore's multicultural success because it is impossible to dislike people whose food you'd die for. Your stomach votes for tolerance. Three—no, four—times a day.

"HERE'S WHERE I START to love this neighborhood," Lynn Biondi is telling me. A history buff who gives private tours of Singapore's museums, Biondi is an aficionado of old Singapore neighborhoods and, at no charge, she's walking me through Tiong Bahru. In the midst of condominiums, Tiong Bahru is a public-housing development built by the British in the late 1930s in accordance with rules promulgated by Stamford Raffles, the city's founder, more than a century before. A white-paint, orderly place with a curving, low-rise art deco style that reminds me of Miami's South Beach, Tiong Bahru is distinguished by a "five-foot way"—a covered walkway to protect pedestrians from rain or sun—that Raffles insisted on.

Biondi leads me to a market burgeoning with fruits from Ecuador, Malaysia, Vietnam. I spot a Japanese muskmelon going for \$65. What can't you find in Singapore? We move on to a bird park, where elderly Chinese men have hung ornate birdcages on a railing to give their birds an airing and a chance to sing or not. But Biondi most

loves the gardens between the sidewalk and the road. What looks like a random tangle of plants turns out to have a design: a fragrant plant, a medicinal plant, a prickly plant to ward off evil. It's a neighborhood I can't help liking, a place that time has spared, though artists and businesspeople are now gentrifying it. Before I can stop myself, I mention my vision of a place of my own in Singapore.

"You need to check out Joo Chiat," Biondi says, naming another old neighborhood, where I will walk up and down, again and again, along a glorious row of traditional houses, pink and blue and green and white, softly faded, gardens below, shuttered windows above. This might work, this piece of the past, this pastel block. I seek an estimate. Three million dollars.

THERE WILL BE NO HOME for me in Singapore. That's all right. Surely there are a dozen other places in Southeast Asia that would accommodate me. Yet I am drawn to Singapore's audacity, to its cockiness. It's a place that still believes in progress. In many ways its living standards, safety, relatively clean air, and, yes, food, surpass what I have back home.

Call it premature nostalgia, but I have a way of missing places



before I leave them. At the end of my stay, I make my way to Geylang. This is as close as Singapore comes to the Asia of the past: a not yet renovated neighborhood where guest workers—Bangladeshis, Indonesians—live and eat. It's a 24-hour neighborhood, a bargain basement, a red-light district. I stroll sidewalks almost blocked by bags of garlic, piles of okra, stacks of eggs. I nod at hookers having breakfast. I pass herbal doctors, massage emporiums, karaoke clubs. When I return that night—my last in Singapore—it has become a movie set, a neon wilderness. I make my way to a raucous food court, a place of beer and cigarette smoke and roast duck. Tables of men kid with waitresses. One waitress sits down with customers who brought fresh roti from a nearby Indian Muslim restaurant.

I'll miss all this. Here is where I find the old Asia—the moods, the tastes, the temptations, and, most of all, the mystery I live for. I had to search for it in the new Singapore, but it's still around. For now. Still, there is no house waiting for me, that's clear. But I don't have to own a piece of the place. Singapore owns a piece of me.

Contributing editor **P. F. KLUGE** is the author of 11 books, including *The Master Blaster* (2012), set in Saipan. Hong Kong-based contributing photographer **PALANI MOHAN**'s most recent book is *Vivid Hong Kong*.

*Wide and deep,
the St. Lawrence
River's eastern
stretch is a venue
for whales—and
the kayakers who
want to see them.*

IN A WILL IT





D, WILD AND

MEETING THE BEAST IN QUEBEC'S FAR EAST

BY **ANDREW EVANS**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **MELISSA FARLOW**

THE SMOKY SCENT OF ROASTED ELK LINGERS ON MY CHIN—AND I'M SURE THE WOLF CAN SMELL IT.

I ate the elk meat for lunch, after cooking it over an open fire I built with kindling on the stony shores of the zigzagging Saguenay Fjord, here in eastern Quebec. The impromptu barbecue seemed like a very Quebec thing to do, but now Jimmy Deschênes is warning me, in the rounded and peculiar French dialect of the Saguenay, “Don’t let him stick his paws on you.”

I nod to Deschênes, who at six feet tall and solidly built looks the part of a Canadian frontiersman in his black boots and cap. He is eyeing the wolf the way a matador sizes up a bull. I slowly kneel on the ground to face the lanky animal. Salt-and-pepper tufts color his tawny coat; his furry tail whips back and forth in a semicircle. The wolf is taller than a German shepherd, with a long jaw and ears stretched to un-doglike proportions.

In a second, he rushes toward me. I sway back, but he’s already against me, his lupine jaws open and aimed for my throat.

Then he licks me. I feel his grainy tongue slide up my neck and across my chin. Jacob the wolf is lapping away every last bit of elk from my face, and I can’t help laughing.

I’m eye-to-eye with a wild animal born in the woods of Quebec, a predator designed by nature to hunt and kill hefty elk—a predator that is licking my chin as if I’m its master and we’re carousing at a dog park. But we’re not in a park; we’re at Deschênes’s 700-acre Ferme 5 Étoiles (5 Stars Farm), a “family vacation center” that offers

many recreational activities—and helps care for abandoned and injured wildlife. It’s the perfect place for me: Wildlife and wilderness are what lured me to Canada’s largest province in the first place.

Quebec sprawls across 595,000 square miles—9,000 more than Alaska—and extends more than 1,200 miles north to south (the distance from New York to Miami). This immensity encompasses swaths of forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers that are home to one of the densest concentrations of wildlife in North America. Jimmy Deschênes is among a select group of professional animal workers with a permit to keep wildlife. Besides wolves, he works with moose, bison, and raccoons, and keeps various farm animals.

“We got Jacob when he was a pup,” he explains to me, “and trained him carefully so he would be used to people.”

“How does a farmer keep a lone wolf in captivity?” I ask, knowing that wolves are pack animals.

“By forming my own pack,” Deschênes says. “Male wolves always submit to the dominant, or alpha, male in the pack, so I stuck my dog in the pen to serve as the alpha. It worked. But as Jacob grows, he probably will become more dominant and less predictable. In other words, wilder.”

Jacob will have plenty of company. Quebec’s wild wolf population is estimated at around 5,000 animals, thanks in part to an abundance of wilderness for roaming—land I’m about to roam myself.

LAI D ACROSS MY CAR’S STEERING WHEEL, my map shows a green thumb of land jutting out toward the Atlantic Ocean and France: Quebec’s Gaspé Peninsula, the final northern hurrah of the Appalachian Mountains before they dive into the sea, a wild land cloaked in rich greens and rimmed by sand beaches and blue waters.

I start the engine and drive northward from Tadoussac, measuring time by the shifting sunlight on the silvered St. Lawrence River, which parallels the road. The view from my window is of endless fir trees disappearing into mossy darkness. The map designates this area as *inhabité*—uninhabited—but I know this wilderness is alive with moose and caribou, cougars and lynx, badgers, black bears, and minks. What I cannot see I can hear—rustling, yelping, hooting, howling.

The towns become scarcer as I drive. When I ask for directions, I discover that the standard distance in Quebec is two and a half hours. It doesn’t matter where I stop or whom I ask for directions; the response is universal.

“*À peu près deux heures et demie,*” says the old man in his small shop—“about two and a half hours.” It’s the ballpark distance from Tadoussac to the riverside town of Baie-Comeau, where I’ll catch the ferry to the Gaspé Peninsula, or Gaspésie in local parlance. The shopkeeper wears overalls and a flannel shirt. His shelves display staples of backwoods Quebec: fishing lures, hunting gear, bags of salty cheese curds, pints of wild blueberries. I buy some of the tart blue fruits and nibble at them like a contented black bear during the drive to the town of Baie-Comeau and on the two-hour ferry ride across the St. Lawrence River to the Gaspé town of Matane.

From Matane I head inland, toward the untamed center of the Gaspé Peninsula. As the road begins to climb the Chic Chocs Mountains I note a sign marking the Chic-Chocs Wildlife Reserve, which borders the Parc National de la Gaspésie. Folded green peaks glow with late-day sunlight, an evergreen panorama rippling against the blue-lavender twilight. I find

Quebecois Gaston Morin monitors inclement afternoon weather from the cozy confines of Café de La Grave.





Winging it, a northern gannet wobbles in for a landing on Île Bonaventure (above), a reserve where thousands of the seabirds nest. Waves of red sandstone billow by Cap Hérissé lighthouse (below) on Île du Cap-aux-Meules, the most populous Magdalen island.







my way to the mountaintop Auberge de Montagne des Chic-Chocs, the inn where I'm staying. I take in a view of vast wilderness, then hear a faint gushing sound: Chute Hélène, a waterfall that paints a long white streak in the distance and is a popular hike from the lodge. I follow the trail through woods and across the International Appalachian Trail (which extends all the way to Gaspé, for those who like to go the extra mile). The waterfall greets me with a cool spray, nature's invitation to swim. I eye the pool at the fall's base—and soon jump in. The water is bracingly cold and deeply refreshing. I feel animal, alive, as if I belong in this eastern Eden.

"YOU MISSED IT!" a fellow guest shouts to me with breathless excitement, pointing in the direction of a moose she'd just scared away. Moose far outnumber humans in the Chic Chocs, and I've been counting on seeing at least one during my three days here, but so far all I've seen are moose prints. She shows me the photo she took—a digital brown smudge running for the woods. Perhaps this will be my lucky day. I hike on, one mile, two miles. More moose prints, no moose. Another mile; I scan the area for moving leaves or telltale antlers. Nothing. I reluctantly head back.

My three-day sojourn passes with no moose sightings, so I prepare to leave. Packing my bags, I glance out the window for a farewell look at the Chic Chocs... and there, like a dream, she is. My moose, a single, muscled female, munching tree leaves not 20 yards away. I step out on the balcony. She sees me.

Once again I'm staring into the eyes of a wild animal. I am so delighted I barely breathe. Then a smaller head emerges. A calf, only a few months old. I freeze still as a statue. It resumes stripping leaves from twigs. I'm entranced, until my eye catches another movement: A second calf's head is pushing up near its mother's massive body. A moose mother and her twins! After all my tracking effort, three moose have tracked me down. Which reminds me of the fundamental rule when observing wildlife: Wait patiently, and nature will come to you.

I GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO APPLY this principle of patience when I visit Île Bonaventure, a rocky islet just off the Gaspé Peninsula's eastern shore. A high-walled castle of stone jutting up from the constant splash of the sea, Île Bonaventure is the realm of North America's largest colony of northern gannet seabirds. As I walk across the island, I smell and hear them before I see them—more than 100,000 screeching gannets, busy with their lives of fishing, nesting, and flying. The cacophony shocks me. After days in the silent wilds of forests and mountains, I find myself in a veritable Bangkok of birds—strutting on the ground, flapping overhead, dive-bombing into the sea at lightning speed. Up on the cliffs, fluffy



Dwelling in the shadow of sunlit Percé Rock (left), the Gaspé village of Percé offers tours to the landmark. Another highlight of the Gaspé Peninsula: sightings of wild moose (above).



Weathered boats (above), vital to life on the Magdalen Islands, take a respite after a busy summer season spent catching fish and lobster. Swatches of pink fireweed (below) bloom on the Gaspé Peninsula's eastern tip, overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence.



gray chicks catch the breeze in their down, impatient for working parents to come home.

These are beautiful birds, white and graceful, with yellow heads and sky blue eyes outlined with black streaks. Surrounded by them, I find it difficult to focus on any single creature—until one gannet focuses on me, curious about the ungainly intruder. It swoops down at me, its wingspan wider than human arms can extend. I duck instinctively, but my caution proves unnecessary. The gannet is not attacking me—only checking my passport, as it were.

More aware now of my role as visitor, I remain low, hovering at the edge of the colony. I'm the wild card here, an outlier in this organized world of nests and wings. I take in the loud display until my ears are ringing, then drop back toward the pink-flowered woods of Île Bonaventure. Travel, I muse, turns us all into foreigners, yes, but wandering into the wild makes us wild—or, maybe, repatriates us to our original wild state.

The dance of nature and man is very much part of daily life on the small cluster of isles called the Magdalen Islands, or Îles de la Madeleine, 150 miles southeast of Cap Gaspé, the Gaspé Peninsula's easternmost point. A scribble of sandbars and islands rimmed with fiery red bluffs, the Magdalens remain a world apart from the mainland, like a forgotten postscript. They are by far the least known corner of the province, at the edge of the moody North Atlantic Ocean.

I'm lucky with the weather when I arrive; it's sunny and warm, and the islands seem practically Caribbean with their white-sand beaches and turquoise lagoons. I walk barefoot in dunes, pushing my heels into soft slopes that are fragrant with candleberry and decorated with the meanderings of fox footprints. On the beach, oystercatchers peck for shellfish. Hardworking islanders do the same, digging in the watery shallows for clams that will end up in chowder bowls on dining tables.

Unlike most North Americans today, the Madelinots still gather much of their food from the wild. On this windswept archipelago, man is predator, fish and shellfish—especially lobster—his prey. Every brightly painted wooden house I pass has a dog, a line of windblown laundry, and a few dozen lobster pots stacked against the lee wall.

"We get huge lobsters in Les Îles—with giant claws," says Cathy Boudreau, pinching the air with both of her hands. "They are the same kind of lobsters you'll find down in Maine, except ours are bigger and taste better," she adds without sarcasm. A proud, ruddy-faced island native whose entire family fishes for lobster, Boudreau freely admits she tires of eating so much of the shellfish. In the land of lobster, beef is an exotic treat.

I spend a day offshore with her and her husband, Bobby Aitken, yanking up long lines of silver mackerel from the blue depths as seagulls scream with jealousy. Curious seals circle us, sneaking a tired fish here and there, blinking their glossy eyes at me before diving below and popping up on the opposite side of the boat. I watch their slippery bodies contort in the clear water and again feel that animal connection.

Foraging, then eating what has been gathered is the gift of life in the Magdalen Islands. Centuries of survival on Canada's fringe have led to a creative cuisine based on whatever nature happens to be offering. With Cathy and Bobby I feast on homemade fish pie, a comforting pile of pastry and seafood that warms against the eternal wind outside.

"*Terre et mer*," is how Johanne Vigneault, chef and owner of La Table des Roy—the Magdalens' premier restaurant—describes her inspiration: "land and sea." Pushing back strands of red hair that match the brilliant island cliffs, she extols the bounty of her islands. "I like beautiful food," she says, nearly blushing at her confession. "I am even seduced by it."

I certainly am seduced by the food she serves—the lobster in butter is *remarquable, oui*—but most memorable is my dessert:

maple soufflé with a wild-rose coulis. One mouthful of this delicate Magdalen delight turns me primal. No longer am I sitting upright in a buttoned collar eating a fancy dessert over an ironed tablecloth—no, I'm feeding on the wild trees and flowers of Quebec. I am the animal, in the woods, tasting the forest.

I END MY QUEBEC SOJOURN near where I began it, on the shores of the mighty St. Lawrence River. The whales have brought me here: leviathan blue whales, gray-backed fin whales, smaller minke whales, white beluga whales.

I know no other place on Earth where this happens, where one can see so many types of whales so close up—even, at times, from a car. They begin to gather in May and cruise the shoreline, spouting exhalations into the air, through October.

In the red glow of dusk I climb into a kayak and join the parade of marine mammals gliding by. I float downstream in my fiberglass shell, bobbing alongside pods of shiny white belugas and their pale newborn calves. Minke whales the length of semitrailers surface from the depths, arch their gray backs, then dive back down with a massive flap of their tails. I lose count after the first dozen or so.



The size of these animals is so unfathomable that each new meeting makes me feel insignificant under the evening's rotunda of stars now flickering into focus.

That night I camp out on the riverbank in a tent near the water's edge, yet I fail to get any sleep. Instead, I find myself listening to the lullaby of whales outside. For hours they continue their slow journey, surfacing, loudly exhaling—*puuuutt*—then slipping back under the water.

Every few minutes, one seems to whisper to me from the river, like a child begging me to come and play. The sighs sound again and again, so that after midnight I'm compelled to get up and join them on the inky edge of the St. Lawrence.

All humans need nature—and I have found it in Quebec. Through the still, dark hours before dawn I sit alone with the whales, my arms wrapped around my knees, staring into the blackness they haunt. I can't see into their eyes, but I sense that they register my presence. We feel each other's closeness, breathing together, sharing an extraordinary encounter in the wilds of Quebec.

ANDREW EVANS visits many of the world's most interesting places as *Traveler's Digital Nomad*. A Francophile, he feels a special affinity for Quebec. Photographer MELISSA FARLOW is a regular contributor to *National Geographic* publications.

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Ports of Call

[SET SAIL FOR EUROPE'S HARBOR MASTERPIECES]

PICTURESQUE, CULTURALLY VITAL, and compact enough to see in a day or savor in a week: Small ports are the hidden treasures of any cruise itinerary. Here are six of Europe's best walkable seaport havens, snug harbors steeped in character, anchored in centuries of history, and brimming with discoveries.

by Margaret Loftus



Evening lights cast a glow on Alesund, Norway.

[VALLETTA, MALTA]

Star of the Mediterranean

With a deep harbor that's the envy of Europe, a stunning collection of baroque buildings, and a history rich with knights and chivalrous tales, Valletta is the jewel of Mediterranean itineraries.

THE SCENE Situated at the base of the Maltese archipelago, Valletta is a fortified peninsula jutting into the inlet that forms the Grand Harbour. Built by the Knights of St. John after they defeated the Ottoman Turks in 1565, the city retains much of its baroque character and air of intrigue. For some 2,000 years it was the most coveted port in the Mediterranean; it was often considered the linchpin of the British Empire. **CITY GEM** Built

in 1661 for the enjoyment of Italian knights, the Barrakka Gardens weren't opened to the public until 1824. The commanding views of the Grand Harbour and Valletta's three sister cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa, and Cospicua are unbeatable. The garden paths are lined with monuments commemorating the island's tumultuous history, from a tribute to Winston Churchill to a touching trio of street urchins cast in bronze by Maltese sculptor Antonio Sciortino. A cannon is fired at noon and sunset as a salute to British rule on the island. **INSIDER'S TIP** "Must-visits include the Manoel Theatre, one of the oldest still functioning baroque theaters

in the world, and St. John's Co-Cathedral, which is also the home of Caravaggio's masterpiece 'Beheading of St. John the Baptist,'" says Maltese-born tenor Joseph Calleja. **LOCAL FLAVOR** Seafood figures prominently on the menus in Valletta—*lampuki* (dorado), octopus, and snails are big here. The national meal is *fenkata*, a rabbit feast whose origins date to the days of the knights when rabbit hunting was restricted. Locals get their *fenkata* fix at Ta' Soldi in Mgarr, well worth the 30-minute drive inland. **NIGHT-LIFE** The resort areas of Paceville and St. Julian are disco-party central. The mellower crowd heads to the open-air BJ's Live Music Club for jazz and rock and the seaside Bedouin Bar, a whitewashed version of a traditional nomadic camp, for its casual scene. **BY SEA** Ship out on a Turkish *gulet* for a day cruise along the northeast coast of Malta. The best stops include a snorkeling expedition off the island of Gozo—which many believe inspired the mythical Ogygia, where the nymph Calypso held Odysseus captive in Homer's *Odyssey*—and in the Blue Lagoon, part of Comino island's nature reserve. **SHIP SHAPE** 311 cruise calls in 2011, including Regents Seven Seas, Seabourn, and Silversea.



PORTS OF CALL 2013



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*A side trip from Malta
offers a glimpse through
Gozo's Azure Window.
Opposite: St. John's
Co-Cathedral in Valletta.*

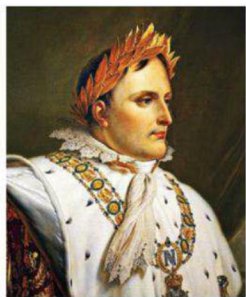


[AJACCIO, FRANCE]

Napoleon's Island in the Sun

Mediterranean French with Italian flair, Ajaccio is part café society and part mountain culture. But these lush hillsides hide a serious independent streak.

THE SCENE "Ajaccio, set deep in a curling bay enclosed by high mountains... suggested nothing so much as an eighteenth-century engraving, cut out and pasted on a photograph of this tremendous landscape to make a surrealist collage," wrote Dorothy Carrington of her approach by ship to the city in her 1971 travel chronicle, *Granite Island: A Portrait of Corsica*. On land, Carrington became enchanted with the gateway to Corsica—colonized by Greece, ruled for centuries by Genoa, and now a region of France—with its pastel buildings fronting the harbor, palm-fringed public squares, and cheerful cafés. **CITY GEM** You might say that Ajaccio has a Napoleon complex. As the birthplace of General Bonaparte,

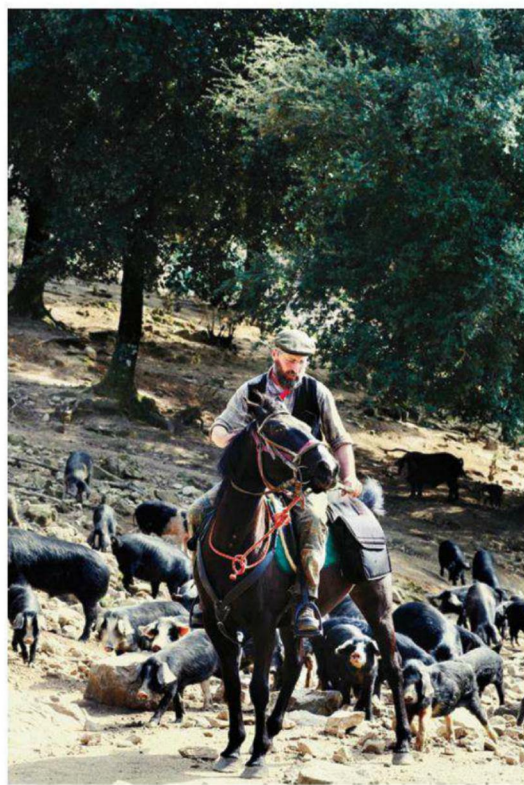


Napoleon Bonaparte

the town presents multiple paeans to the onetime emperor of France. If you have to choose one, make a pilgrimage to Musée National de la Maison Bonaparte. **INSIDER'S TIP** Explore the Marché Central d'Ajaccio, the daily outdoor market, near the port, says food writer David McAninch, a devotee of Ajaccio. "It's a great slice of city life. You don't have to be shopping for food to enjoy it." But if you are, pick up a selection of charcuterie made from the island's chestnut-loving pigs and *brocciu*, a rich ricotta-like cheese made from sheep's milk. The Tour de France marks its 100th anniversary in 2013, and for the first time, hilly Corsica has not only been included

but will be the starting point. **LOCAL FLAVOR** Corsican cuisine was influenced more by the mountains than the sea. Auberge U Licettu, a ten-mile drive into the hills, is as traditional as it gets, serving rustic fare like wild boar and lamb. **NIGHTLIFE** Café culture rules in Ajaccio. Sit at a table near the harbor and order a glass of crisp Corsican white wine from Patrimoine or a spot of chilled *mirto*, a digestive made of myrtle berries.

BYSEA Hop a three-hour boat excursion with Découvertes Naturelles to tour the rocky and wild Îles Sanguinaires that dot the entrance to the Gulf of Ajaccio. **SHIP SHAPE** 250 cruise calls a year, including ships from Princess, Disney, Seabourn, and Costa.



A farmer guides his pigs in the hills near Ajaccio.

[ÅLESUND, NORWAY]

Northern Lights & Sights

Art nouveau architecture. A Norwegian food festival and a historic harbor. Fjords and mountains. Ålesund could be the backdrop for a Nordic fairy tale—with a modern plot twist.

THE SCENE Sprawled on a collection of rugged North Sea islands with mountains looming in every direction, Ålesund is the quintessential Scandinavian seaport. But the town's unusual concentration of Jugendstil, or art nouveau architecture, built after

a devastating fire in 1904 makes it a design destination. **CITY GEM** Let the pros point out the turrets, towers, and decorative flourishes of the city's distinctive architecture on a guided tour through its cobblestone streets. The highlight of the walk is a stop at the Jugendstilsenteret, a former pharmacy, now the interpretive Art Nouveau Centre with an impeccably preserved interior. **INSIDER'S TIP** Climb the 418 steps to the top of local mountain Aksla for a sweeping vista of the town center, fjords, and the Sunnmøre Alps. "Locals go to the Kniven and Rundskue overlooks, where you have spectacular 360-degree views," says Ålesund resident Bertil Holen. Here's where to snap that shot that will make you the momentary envy of your Instagram friends. And, as Holen points out with a wink, "it's for free"—a bit of a rarity in a notoriously pricey nation. **LOCAL FLAVOR** Ålesunders love their *svele*—a sort of crepe filled with butter and sugar or *brunost*, a caramelized cheese made from whey—with a cup of strong coffee, a snack that's popular on local ferries. But bacalao is their mainstay: Ålesund exports more of



Old meets new in Ålesund, where a historic port was rebuilt in art nouveau style in the early 20th century.

SMALL IS GOOD

Size-wise: Small ships have fewer passengers, can navigate shallow waterways to call on ports that are often inaccessible to larger vessels, and can dock more quickly.

the dried, salted cod, also known as klipfish, than anywhere else in the world. Try it at XL Diner, where chef Ivar Breivik makes it shine in no less than seven dishes, including the Norwegian comfort classic with bacon and stewed peas. Visit Ålesund in August during the Norwegian Food Festival, and enjoy a bountiful Nordic feast featuring both traditional and daringly modern cuisine made from fresh local ingredients. **NIGHTLIFE** In the summer, snag a table at an outdoor café and nurse a local Sylte pineapple soda or cold Hansa pilsner. Kick back and watch the sunset around midnight—the light is so intense, say Ålesunders, that the ocean appears to be burning.

BY SEA Paddle a kayak down the Brosundet canal through the heart of town, at eye level with the chiseled old salts hawking fresh fish and shrimp off their colorful wooden boats. Rentals are available through Actin and 62 Nord, both of which are found near Queen Sonja's square. The picturesque fishing village of Alnes, on the island of Godøy (a quick boat or bus ride from Ålesund), is home to a landmark lighthouse. Climb the tower for magnificent views, learn about the coastal culture, and order a slice of the signature lighthouse cake. **SHIP SHAPE** About 120 annual cruise calls, including ships from Norwegian Cruise Line, Cunard, and Crystal Cruises.

[GDAŃSK, POLAND]

Old Town, New Energy

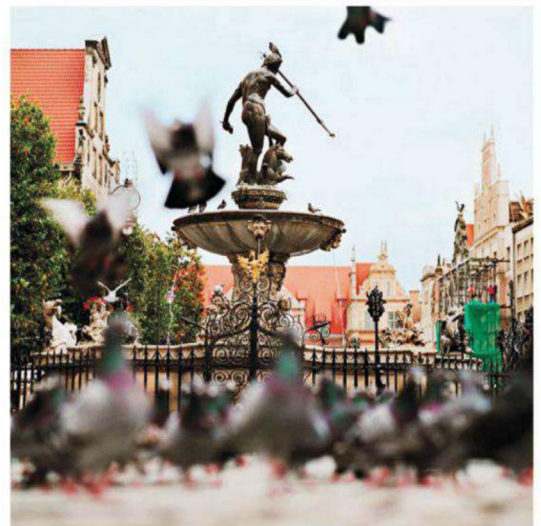
From star Hanseatic trading port to the straw that broke the back of communist rule, Gdańsk's thousand-year history is evident everywhere you look. **THE SCENE** Gdańsk grabbed headlines back in the 1980s as the birthplace of the Solidarity movement, which led to the toppling of communist rule in Central Europe, but the town's history goes much deeper. Part of a triumvirate of cities, with Gdynia and Sopot, the enclave was founded a thousand years ago and once prospered as a Hanseatic League trading port. The city's Old Town was rebuilt after intense World War II bombing, but it's still evocative of its heyday. "Everywhere you go you are reminded about the history," says Kuba Sikorski, a gallery owner in the Old Town. "When you walk through Mariacka Street, it's so easy to imagine the merchants in their hurry rushing to the port." **CITY GEM** In an urban center rich with monuments, St. Mary's Basilica looms largest. Built between the 14th and 16th centuries, it's one of the grandest brick churches in the world. The interior is just as inspiring with soaring vaults and a 15th-century astronomical clock built by Hans Düringer. Climb the nearly 400 steps to the top of the tower for

a memorable panoramic city view. **INSIDER'S TIP** Get an early start, suggests Sikorski. "I love the Old Town early in the morning, when the city slowly wakes up with the sound of church bells—and there are many here—and pigeons fluttering about." Amble down storied Mariacka Street and marvel at its Gothic buildings, many of them reconstructed to their former glory from original stone. **LOCAL FLAVOR** Invented in Gdańsk in the 16th century when gold was believed to have medicinal properties, gold-flecked herbal Goldwasser liqueur is the local post-pierogi nightcap at Goldwasser Restaurant. **NIGHTLIFE** Known for its resort spas, Sopot—Gdańsk's sister city a half-hour train ride away—has become the spot for nightlife with its street performers, restaurants, and clubs (including the iconic Spatifik, open since the 1960s) around Bohaterów Monte Cassino Street. **BY SEA** Windy and natural, Hel Peninsula—a train ride from Gdańsk or an hour via summertime ferry from Gdynia—is nirvana for kite-surfing and windsurfing. **SHIP SHAPE** 29 annual cruise calls in Gdańsk; 72 in the sister port of Gdynia, including ships from Princess, Seabourn, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Godøy island, near Ålesund.



FELIX LORENZO (BIKE), DAGMAR SCHWELTE/LAIF/REDOX (CAFÉ, FOUNTAIN, OPPOSITE PAGE), TOBIAS GEMBER/LAIF/REDOX (BUILDINGS, OPPOSITE PAGE)



Tradition reigns in the Gulf of Gdańsk—and history has never looked so good. Scenes include Café Zaścianek in Sopot (left), the Neptune Fountain in Gdańsk's Old Town (above), and colorful facades at Gdańsk's Długi Targ (below).



*A youthful culture
bubbles in Tallinn,
bringing sparkle
to storied sites,
such as the onion
domes of Alexander
Nevsky Cathedral.*



[TALLINN, ESTONIA]

A Baltic Port With a Modern Beat

Cobbled streets lined with old, gabled houses. A passion for music. Universal Wi-Fi. Tallinn is an old soul with a zest for life. **THE SCENE** For a city that's pushing 900 years old, Tallinn has a fresh face and the bravado to support it. A jam-packed performing arts calendar, thriving high-tech community, and the New Nordic food movement have injected this Baltic port with an unstoppable energy. **CITY GEM** With its Gothic spires, historic homes, and winding streets, the Old Town has a Camelot feel and a compact layout that's easily navigable on foot. Rise above the throngs by taking a stroll on the medieval wall—the

portion that connects the Nunna, Sauna, and Kuldjala towers is open to the public—or climb to the top of one of the 20 defensive towers for a view of the red-tiled skyline. **INSIDER'S TIP** The Estonian Song and Dance Festival debuted in Tartu and is now held every five years in Tallinn. But, with an abundant arts calendar, there's no need to wait until the next one in 2014. "The summer months are filled with open-air festivals and concerts," says Tallinn native Ene Palmiste. "Estonians just love to use every opportunity to take their lives outdoors. Locals believe that there is no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing."

LOCAL FLAVOR *Sült* (jellied pork), *verivorst* (blood sausage), and *vürtsikulu* (spiced Baltic sprat) are seasonal Estonian staples. At avant-garde restaurant Neh, dinner takes a modern turn with edgy dishes such as salted ostrich served with a shot of pine vodka. **NIGHTLIFE** Party with Tallinn's chic set at the Butterfly Lounge. **BY SEA** At Seaplane Harbor, hitch a ride aboard the *Kajsamoor*, a 1939 schooner, for a two-hour sail along the Tallinn coastline and a spiel on the port's maritime history. **SHIP SHAPE** 293 cruise calls in 2012, including ships from Crystal, Celebrity, Holland America, and Windstar.



Tallinn's Town Hall Square.

[ZADAR, CROATIA]

Design Within Beach



Dugi Otok, an Adriatic island.

Anchor of a sprawling Adriatic archipelago. Architecture that spans millennia. Public art installations. Zadar is the laid-back little sister to Dubrovnik. **THE SCENE** Flanked by dozens of idyllic Adriatic islands and within an hour's drive of five national parks, the peninsula city's natural beauty is matched only by its epic history. For nearly 3,000 years, this port on the northern Dalmatian coast has tried to fend off foreign powers with varying success. Architectural legacies of these interlopers are visible today in the city's Roman forum and in various Venetian ramparts around town. While the city center is on the Old Town Peninsula, most of Zadar is on the mainland. Modern public art and a lively café scene keep all parts of the city very 21st century. **CITY GEM** With its signature cylindrical shape and distinctive dome, the ninth-century Church of St. Donat has become synonymous with Zadar. No longer used as a church, the monument welcomes visitors and hosts a series of summer concerts—ranging from Brazilian guitarist Daniel Wolff to the Zadar Chamber Orchestra—made all the more resonant by the building's acoustics. **INSIDER'S TIP** The "Sea Organ," an art installation

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in small
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often within
strolling
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the dock.

of pipes below the new pier, harnesses the energy of the ocean waves to produce an otherworldly soundscape. "The sound is so soothing, and sitting by the water is just a great way to unwind after a day walking around the city," says Marijana Guncunski, a Croatian expat who spends part of every summer at her family beach home nearby. "Of course, grab a delicious Croatian *sladoled* (ice cream) on the way."

LOCAL FLAVOR This is the Adriatic, land of grilled seafood; you can't go wrong ordering fish, calamari, and mussels *na gradele* (grilled).

Wash it all down with a glass of rakija (brandy) or *travarica* (an herbal spirit). For a late-night snack or breakfast, try *burek*, a savory cheese-filled phyllo pastry, with a cup of the Turkish-style coffee favored by Croats at the myriad of bakeries in Varoš—the historic heart of town—that are open into the wee hours. **NIGHTLIFE** After dark, any hip Zadrani walks to the Garden, a minimalist-chic boîte atop the city walls opened by UB40 drummer James Brown and music producer Nick Colgan, for live jazz, Latin grooves, or electronica. Sip a local

Karlovačko beer and play a game of chess or just soak up the seductive loungey, relaxed atmosphere that seems distinctly European.

BY SEA The marina is full of boats vying to ferry you to the Zadar archipelago, where beaches, medieval villages, and snorkeling excursions await. Take a half-day trip to Dugi Otok, the largest island, to spend an idyllic afternoon on the sandy, uncrowded Saharun beach. **SHIP SHAPE** 100 annual cruise calls stop in Zadar, including



ships from Crystal Cruises, Silversea Cruises, and Voyages to Antiquity.

Contributing editor **MARGARET LOFTUS** frequently sets sail from her home port of Charleston, South Carolina.

FRANCO COGOLI/SIME (GLASS), HANS MADE/LAIF/REDUX (KIDS)



Artist Nikola Basic's solar panel installation makes for a playful platform in Zadar. In Croatia, a sip of maraschino liqueur (top) is a time-honored tippie.



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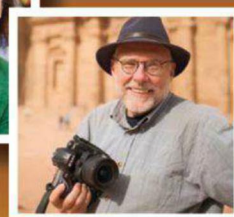
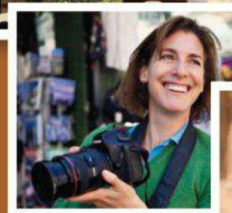
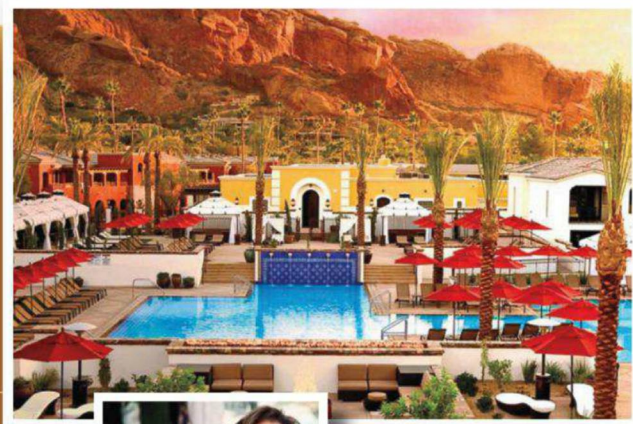
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Nikon & Nat Geo Announce: The Full Story Winners!

National Geographic and Nikon chose five photographers to tell their stories with the new, full-framed Nikon D600. Check out the winning photo essays at nationalgeographic.com/Nikon on January 24th. And, starting on February 10th, be sure to follow Andrew Evans's "Digital Nomad Blog" to see the Grand Prize Winner's images, posted in real time, from assignment in the Galápagos Islands.



At the heart of the image™



Boosted by the Internet, WMMT radio has gone global. Opposite: Hikers stand atop High Rock on Kentucky's Pine Mountain Trail.



In a small Kentucky mountain town,
the local culture is anything but static

Radio Days



BY BRUCE SCHOENFELD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN WESTERGREN

Hear those slashing chords by Jason and the Scorchers? That's WMMT, the Voice of Hillbilly Nation, broadcasting from Whitesburg, a town in Kentucky's southeastern corner. Now the announcer is reading the community calendar, plugging a dance at the American Legion and a festival in nearby Neon. And that's Paul Simon's "Peace Like a River," followed by a shaggy-dog tale about accompanying a friend to buy a van.



WMMT's transmitted signal, at 88.7 FM, serves the hamlets and hollers of coal country, parts of four states tucked up tight against the Appalachians. But for more than two years, I've been listening on the Internet (www.wmmt.org), taking it with me wherever I go. In rural Spain I've tuned in to Wiley Quixote's genre-bending music show, *Riding Around Listening to the Radio*. I've heard the *Possum Opry* in Cleveland, and the weekly *Coal Report* while luxuriating poolside at the SLS in Beverly Hills, which struck me as a serious argument for income redistribution.

I've sat on my porch in Colorado for *Calls From Home*, an oddly riveting program during which convicts and their families send evocative audio messages to each other. And I was listening when the station held a drive to raise \$200—*two hundred dollars!*—by playing the most annoying music imaginable, Rupert Holmes's "The Piña Colada Song" and Paper Lace's "The Night Chicago Died," as the fives and tens trickled in. All along, I was filling in my mental map of Whitesburg and the surrounding area.

Appalachia I knew about from Loretta Lynn songs and *Life* magazine photo spreads. But Whitesburg, a mountain town of some 2,100 inhabitants, came alive to me in the music and chatter I heard each day. I could visualize the Marathon station that underwrote some of the programming, and the good bottlers of Pikeville Coca-Cola, "serving Pike, Letcher, Perry, Knott, and Floyd counties." I cringed to imagine what the mountaintop-removal practices I'd learned about on *Inside Appalachia* were doing to the soil and water while mutilating panoramic vistas I'd never seen.

Most of all, I wondered what kind of singular place this corner of eastern Kentucky must be to support a media outlet so wildly uncommercial, so individual and eclectic, that rabid pro-coal and anti-coal DJs are able to follow each other in the studio with the same graceful dissonance that lets Mary Chapin Carpenter follow the Rezillos on the air.

One day, while listening in from my basement office, I resolved to find out.

INTERNET RADIO ISN'T SATELLITE RADIO. It's the opposite. XM and Sirius are broadcast from the nowhere of nether space. Their channels, generic by design, seek to appeal to the broadest possible audience within a niche: cool jazz or Springsteen songs or college football. Internet radio, on the other hand, feels like eavesdropping on a conversation at the bus stop. It's the best way I know to tap into the spirit and soul of a place short of reading the local daily. (Maybe better, considering how much wire copy fills newspapers these days.)

I'd made a practice of listening to stations from places I'd been or planned to visit. Hearing Red Sox gossip reminded me of my Connecticut boyhood. Flamenco music from Seville brought back memories of chasing bullfighters around Spain. But WMMT I found by accident when a neighbor mentioned she enjoyed the unpredictable juxtapositions in its music shows. I'd never been to that part of Kentucky, never even thought about it. Yet after I started listening regularly, Whitesburg felt like my hometown.

Getting there is no simple task. Tri-Cities in Tennessee is the closest commercial airport, though it's 95 miles and two states away by car. But the fare was prohibitive and the timetable inconvenient, so I decided to fly into Charleston, West Virginia, and make the three-hour drive. I landed, drove southwest, and watched the landscape change around me. Open vistas narrowed as I headed into the hills. I hadn't been in Kentucky for more than five minutes when the seek function on the radio stopped at 88.7 and I heard the twang of a steel banjo.

Before I'd left, I'd read up on Whitesburg's history. There wasn't much of it. In 1842, parts of Harlan and Perry counties combined

to form Letcher County, with Whitesburg—a town of fewer than a hundred residents then called Summit City—as the county seat. The initial settlers were Scotch-Irish, later augmented by a smattering of Europeans, including a community of Italian stonemasons who arrived with the railroad before World War I. Streets were concreted in 1924. Nothing much of significance happened after that until alcohol sales in restaurants were approved in 2007.

I'd called WMMT in advance to set up a visit, but I needn't have bothered. The station has listeners as far away as Sweden, I was told. Every summer a handful of fans from various places make the pilgrimage to see what the place is like. Visiting is as easy as showing up at the door.

Before long I was driving past its studios, which are in a two-story building of unpainted wood that looks like the *Whole Earth Catalog* come to life. The station is part of Appalshop, a nonprofit founded in 1969 as the Appalachian Film Workshop by a Yale architecture grad named Bill Richardson, who came south with his wife and a War on Poverty grant. Over the years, it expanded to include a theater, a concert venue, and, in 1985, WMMT. "Every time someone came along with a new idea they wanted to do, they'd just do it," Bill's wife, Josephine, told me when I ate lunch at her Courthouse Café, a restaurant in town that she has owned and run for nearly three decades. "You can still hear that spirit in the station."



Appalachia is cabin country. Opposite: Old-time banjo virtuoso Kevin Howard jams with Carrie Wells (fiddle) and Matthew Carter (guitar).

Sitting beside Wiley Quixote in the studio that afternoon, watching him choose tracks seemingly at random, I understood what she meant. "I had no idea what I was going to play when I walked in today," he admitted. "I have no idea now."

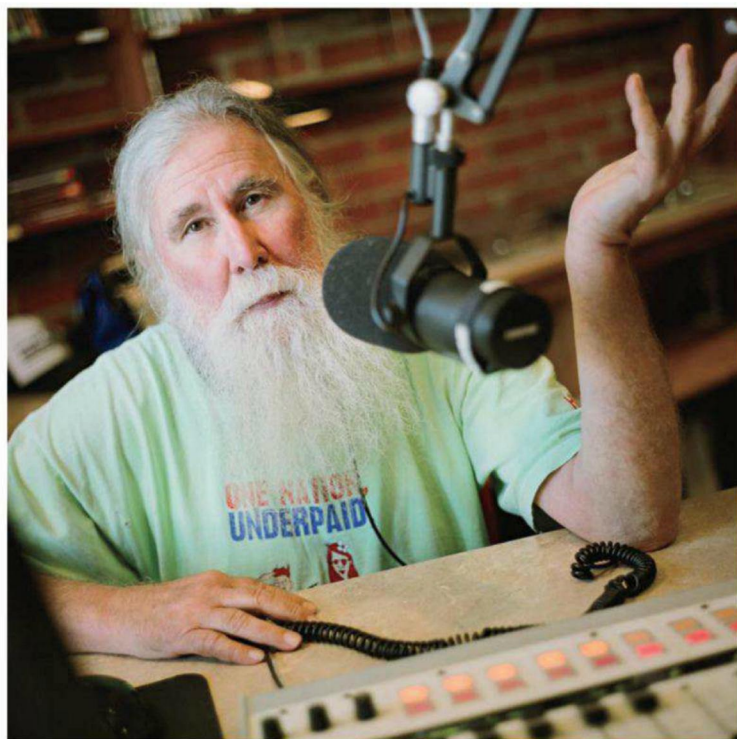
Quixote turned out to be a gentle, white-bearded man named Jim Webb. As you'd expect about someone who has adopted such an outlandish handle, he was quite the character. I'd already driven



In Our iPad Edition: Tune in to WMMT for live broadcasts and get a 360-degree panoramic tour of the radio station's studio. Our iPad edition is available for download from the App Store.

past land he owns on Pine Mountain, a campground called Wiley's Last Resort. It has a five-gallon water cooler and other touristic amenities, but it's decorated by the largest collection of abandoned or reclaimed signs, farm implements, and other detritus I've ever seen. Webb holds an annual music event at the site called the Pine Mountain Tacky Lawn Ornament and Pink Flamingo Soiree. This year, it drew several hundred people from as far as Oregon. "It's getting big," he said, with the tone of someone whose private joke has gone viral on the Internet. "I don't want it bigger."

THESE HAMLETS of the Cumberland Plateau, I quickly learned, tend to be insular and inward-looking. You'd understand why if you drove up Pine Mountain and gazed down at the wrinkled landscape. The scattered settlements below rest at the bottom of deep valleys, some only a few dozen feet across. The steep green hillsides create strong feelings of comfort or claustrophobia, depending on your taste. "To be raised in these mountains is to be raised with a third parent," said Joel Beverly, a local environmental consultant. Yet because the topography fosters isolation, it can't help but emphasize the difference between your town and everywhere else.



For nearly three decades, radio host Jim "Wiley Quixote" Webb has been a voluble—and, often, irreverent—voice of "Hillbilly Nation."

It didn't help that coal companies came in at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th and gathered up mineral rights for pennies per acre. They established company towns with names like Seco (South East Coal Company) and Vicco (Virginia Iron, Coal & Coke), clots of houses and schools and stores offering employment, housing, education, medical care, even funeral arrangements. The towns were only a few miles from one another, but so independent that they often operated in the time zone of their parent company and issued their own currency. That meant that money earned in one place couldn't be spent in another. "I attribute the intensity of the question 'Are you from here?' to the history of

coal mining," said Amelia Kirby, Beverly's wife, who grew up over the Virginia border in Wise. "Whitesburg is a deeply friendly place but also a deeply suspicious place. Those two things run parallel in a way that's really complicated."

Even today, with paved roads and four-wheel-drive vehicles, getting from one town to the next is a chore. I can only imagine what it must have been like before the automobile. As I wound my way around Letcher County, the steep, scrub-covered hillsides were a ubiquitous presence. The towns nestled between them resembled each other less than I would have guessed. Had they been in Sicily, or the Balkans, they would have developed distinct dialects and local dishes by now. "That's why the radio station is so important," Kirby said. "It's a unifying presence for an area that sorely needs one."

After high school, Kirby left home for Hampshire College in Massachusetts, but she always knew she'd be back. She volunteered at WMMT while her father served as station manager. And even before those local laws against alcohol sales were repealed, she saw an opportunity to create a social hub in Whitesburg patterned after the regional community the radio station serves.

As the county seat, Whitesburg draws workers of all kinds, but it had nowhere for them to gather beyond its few restaurants. So Kirby and Beverly renovated an old building on Main Street, then opened Summit City, which is part coffee shop and bar, part performance space, part town square. Almost instantly, it became a haunt for everyone from coal miners to poets.

During my stay, I ate breakfast there every day, usually a sandwich of tomatoes and house-made hummus—a lighter counterpoint to the beans and corn bread (the local specialty) or fried chicken that I'd devoured the night before. I stopped back frequently, often to make a chance acquaintance that sent me off exploring in a new direction. It's where I met local personalities such as John Pellegrini, a Harvard Medical School grad and practicing surgeon. One afternoon, he took me into his office because he wanted to show me something. On the walls, down one hallway, up another, and into the consultation rooms, was a complete set of the 105 lithographs of Salvador Dalí's *Biblia Sacra*.

"Right here in Whitesburg," he pointed out. "Bet you'd never have guessed."

EVERYWHERE I WENT, WMMT provided the sound track for my visit. Each time I got back in the car to go investigate something else I'd heard about, a winery in Seco or a hike up to the waterfall in Bad Branch, the music that greeted me seemed eerily in tune with my mood. I drove past denuded mountaintops to the sound of Kris Kristofferson and felt wistful, then road-tripped to a nearby Gingerbread Festival while exultantly singing along with the Jam.

My last night in town coincided with a monthly concert at the station. The headliner was a renowned bluegrass band, Blue Highway. I ate a dinner of chicken and dumplings, sweet potatoes, and soup beans and corn bread and then settled in with 150 others for what amounted to a private performance. The band's virtuosity was impressive, but my appetite for bluegrass is limited. After an hour, I returned to the Super 8.

I greeted two of the high school girls who work the front desk as they smoked on the steps. Then I went upstairs and instinctively did what I nearly always do when I arrive at an empty hotel room: punched up WMMT on my laptop. I spread out on the bed, listened to the concert I'd just left, and let my mind wander. I could have been anywhere in the world, but here I was in Whitesburg.

Colorado-based Emmy Award-winning writer **BRUCE SCHOENFELD** *grew up listening to shortwave radio. Traveler photo editor* **DAN WESTERGREN** *attended journalism school in Appalachia and was eager to return.*

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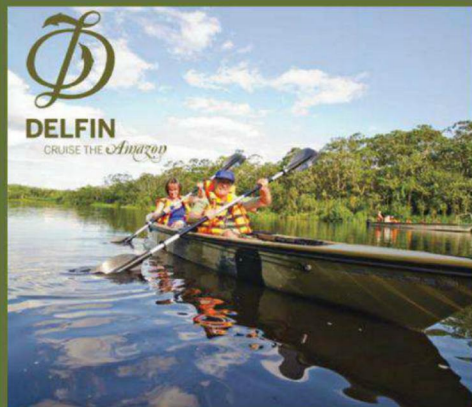
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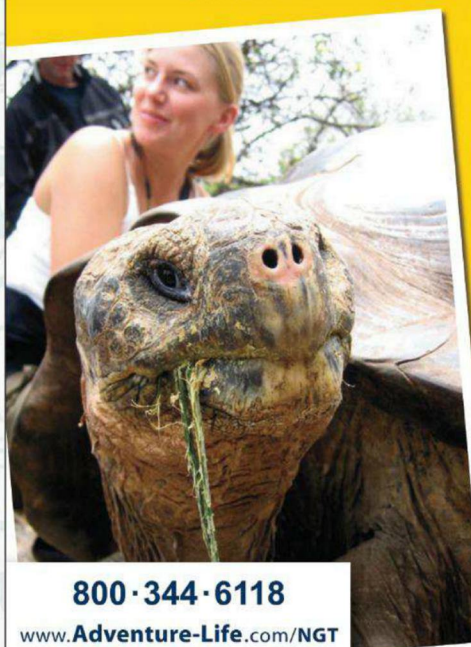
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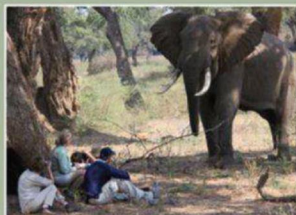
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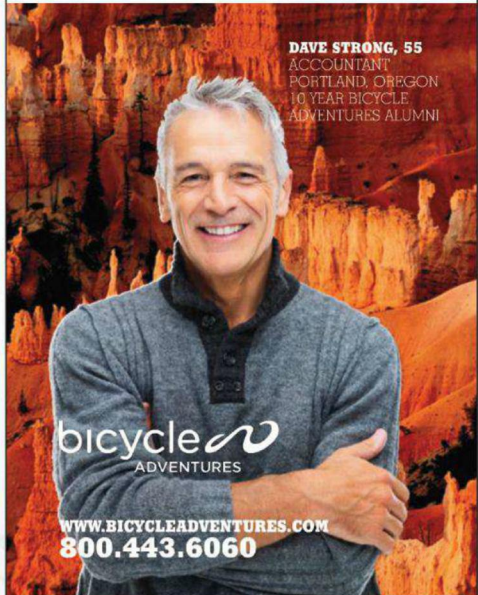
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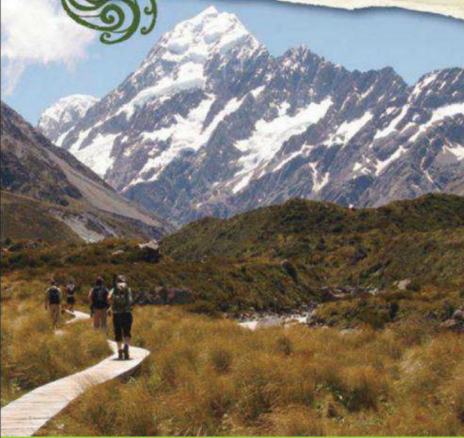
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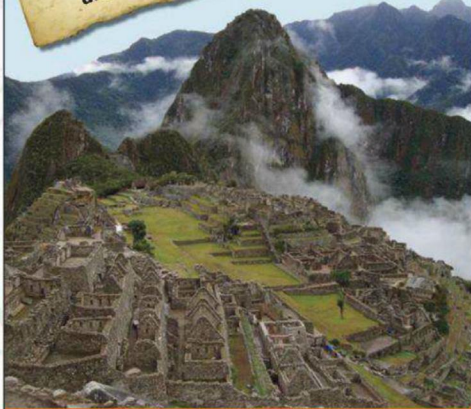


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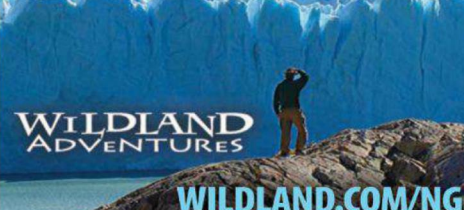


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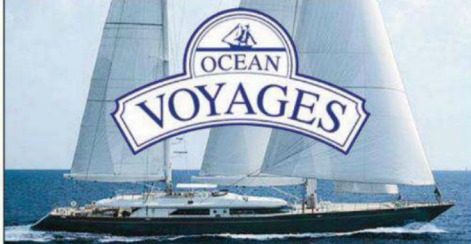
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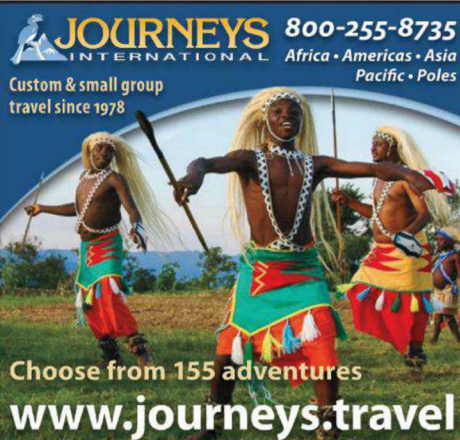
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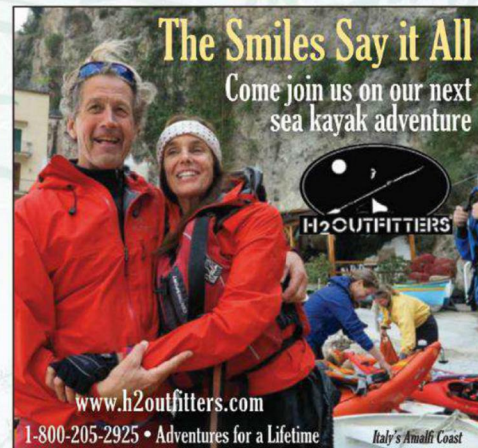
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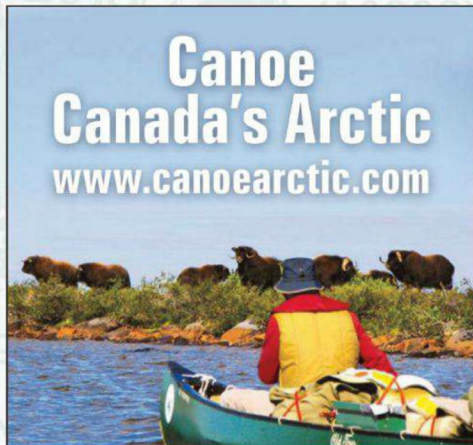
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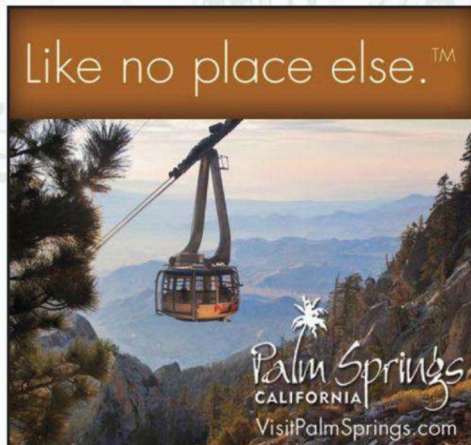
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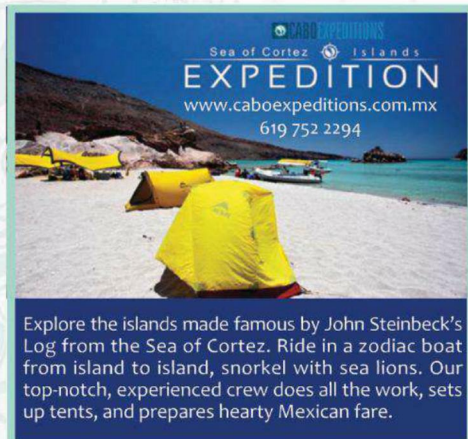
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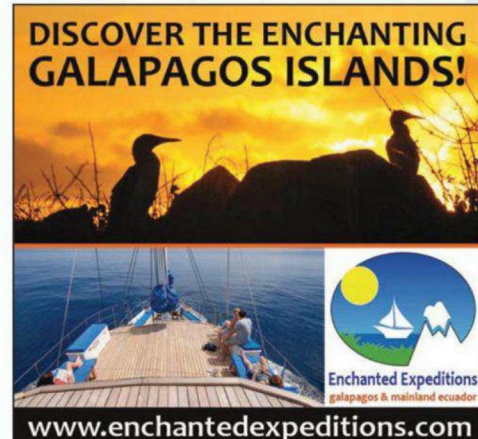
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Grand Central Terminal

FEW MANHATTAN MOMENTS are as romantic as arriving at Grand Central Terminal, New York City's temple of transportation, built by shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt. In February, the busy beaux arts edifice marks 100 years. The Big Apple's third most visited site, Grand Central now attracts some 21 million tourists annually. But the picture wasn't always so rosy; with train travel on the decline post WWII, the future of the terminal appeared to veer off the rails. Preservationists, including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, successfully stepped in to save the historic hub from certain destruction. —MARGIE GOLDSMITH

GOD'S VIEW: William K. Vanderbilt commissioned a zodiac painted on the domed ceiling, but muralist Paul Helleu painted it backward and suggested that it portrayed God's perspective of the universe.

SHUCKS: The Oyster Bar, a New York landmark since 1913, opened just three weeks after the station's debut. The restaurant provided a place for long-distance travelers and commuters to slurp oysters.

SECRET RENDEZVOUS: The city's most famous meeting point—"under the

clock at Grand Central"—conceals a spiral staircase used by staff to move between the information booths on the main and lower levels. The clock itself is worth millions.

ACOUSTIC TRICKERY: Grand Central has a "Whispering Gallery" on the lower level just outside the Oyster Bar. People can stand in opposite corners and telegraph their voices to each other.

FAKE-OUT: To get you to the track on time, the schedule board moves departure times up by one minute.

HIDDEN TRACK: Beneath the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is a hidden platform and railcar built for dignitaries who could privately access the hotel by an elevator. Gen. John Pershing was the first to use the station in 1938. Franklin D. Roosevelt used it to conceal his inability to walk unassisted due to polio.

HAVE YOU SEEN MY JACKET? Riders who lose something on the Metro-North Railroad can report it online; the Lost & Found room returned 13,126 items to their owners in 2011.

ROCKET SCIENCE: In 1957, NASA displayed a Redstone rocket in the great dome to counter fears of Sputnik. A hole was drilled in the ceiling to tether the tip of the rocket next to the constellation Pisces. It is still visible.

SECRET OF THE STAIRS: Which of the two grand marble staircases is original? The ornate acorn and oak leaf carvings of the west staircase—symbols from the Vanderbilt family crest—distinguish the old staircase from the simpler east steps, built in the 1996 restoration.

QUIZZABLE

How many people pass through Grand Central daily?

- a) 120,000 b) 60,000
c) 750,000

The number rises to one million during the holiday season.

Answer: C



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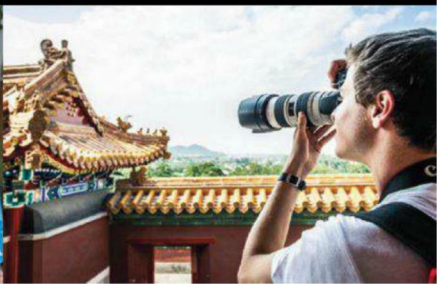


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